

Al Akhawayn University Newsletter

November-December 2012



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Al Akhawayn University Moves One Step Closer Towards International Accreditation

On November 16, 2012 Al Akhawayn University was granted candidacy status by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC).

Based on the Commission's finding that Al Akhawayn meets the criteria for candidacy, the status was granted to the university which has embarked on the institutional accreditation process since 2009, and which has earned international accreditations for different academic programs. In 2010, Al - Akhawayn University earned "Eligibility" as a first stage in the process and since then it has worked on the second stage, candidacy, before the final one - that of full accreditation.

"Our University has been working on accreditation for some time now and the status of Candidacy indicates that we have met the criteria set by the commission for our institution to proceed toward accreditation," said President Driss Ouaouicha. "In their last regularly scheduled meeting, the NEASC commission reviewed our

application materials and following a decision by its board members, declared Al Akhawayn a candidate."

"Now that we have been granted Candidacy status we will start working on the full accreditation," said Cherif Bel Fekih, Vice President for Student Affairs and Interim Director of Development and Communication.

"This new stage in the process is the last and most important one."

"NEASC is the regional accrediting body for 232 colleges and universities in New England, including Harvard, MIT"

The Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges is the regional accrediting

body for 232 colleges and universities in New England, including Harvard, MIT and eight overseas institutions. It is recognized by the US Secretary of Education as a reliable authority on the quality of education for the institutions it accredits. The Commission is also recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), affirming that its Standards and processes are consistent with the quality, improvement, and accountability expectations that CHEA has established.



Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane wishes you a very happy new year.



Al –Muwatta: A First Authoritative English Text to be Produced by Al Akhawayn University

Al Akhawayn University signed on December 13, 2012 an agreement with the Moroccan Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs to supervise and produce the translation of *Al-Muwatta*, the first written collection of *hadith** on Muslim law.

Al-Muwatta is considered as one of the principal texts of Islamic jurisprudence alongside the Koran. The author, Imam Malik Ibn Anas, was one of the greatest early scholars of Islam, and the founder of the Maliki school of religious jurisprudence.

"The translation is expected to be published in two years," said Connell Monette, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, Associate Professor at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and coordinator of the project. "This will be the first and only academic version in English that could be used in universities and for scholarly research across the world."

Both Moroccan Minister of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs Ahmed Toufiq and Al Akhawayn President Driss Ouaouicha signed the agreement at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane.

The agreement is set to produce an authoritative translation of the early Arabic legal text *Al-Muwatta* of Imam Malik. The book will be of great value for students of History, Law, Islamic Studies and International Studies, since *Al-Muwatta* forms the basis of Maliki jurisprudence as it is understood throughout the Arab and Muslim world. The edition will be published in North America or Europe as an Al Akhawayn University initiative, sponsored by the Moroccan Ministry of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs. The forthcoming text will be based on the new Royal Annotated Edition.

"An agreement is set to produce an authoritative translation of the early Arabic legal text Al-Muwatta of Imam Malik"

Former Italian Prime Minister Explores the Euro Crisis and European Integration with Al Akhawayn Community

His Excellency Romano Prodi, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Sahel, former Prime Minister of Italy (1996-1998 and 2006-2008), and former President of the European Commission (1999-2005), addressed Al Akhawayn University students, faculty, and staff in a lecture on "The crisis of the Euro and the Dilemmas of Greater European Political Integration", on November 19, 2012 at Al Akhawayn campus in Ifrane.

"Students are at the forefront of the new Morocco," said Prodi in his opening remarks. "You will be the new leaders of tomorrow, and you have a large responsibility."

This special lecture by Romano Prodi explored the EU, its economy, politics, history, and changing dynamics, the Euro, and democracy. The lecture focused on the problems and challenges Europe is facing today and reflected on the possible solutions for the future such as relationship building and open cooperation between countries.

"After 2002 when the Euro came out, Europe changed at many levels because of competition, immigration, and unemployment, leading to a big change in the political situation... where political decisions have been completely reversed," said Prodi.



His Excellency **Romano Prodi**, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Sahel, Former President of the European Commission, and Former Prime Minister of Italy, addressing Al Akhawayn community.

"Students are at the forefront of the new Morocco, You will be the new leaders of tomorrow, and you have a large responsibility."

"Today's Europe is in crisis, but I am confident that what is worse has passed. We are divided but the crisis will help us to be solidary."

With a note of optimism, Prodi stressed that it is in tough times that unification takes place. The wars and crises that Europe has undergone only helped it come out stronger and more unified. The richness and depth of the lecture had a large impact on Al Akhawayn students, who did not miss a chance of asking questions and interacting with Prodi after he finished his speech.

"Prodi's lecture is a special occasion to members of Al Akhawayn community," said Al Akhawayn President Driss Ouaouicha. "His views on the crisis of the Euro and the challenges met by the European countries in the context of political integration are important in understanding world dynamics, the global impact of the current economic situation, and its impact on Morocco given our country's economic and political ties with Europe."

Banque Centrale Populaire CEO Talks Banking to AUI Students



Mohamed Benchaahboun, CEO of "[La Banque Centrale Populaire](#)" (BCP) and member of Al Akhawayn University Board of Trustees, presented his institution's marketing strategies in a lecture organized by Al Akhawayn student-run Marketing club on November 1, 2012.

"First, I commend Al Akhawayn students' initiative in bridging the gap between the university and the business world," said Benchaahboun to Al Akhawayn students in his opening remarks.

Benchaahboun gave a thorough presentation about the BCP Group, its marketing strategy and the institutional positioning and structure, the marketing approach and its main missions, a view on investment and finance themes, and the BCP strategy in Sub Saharan Africa.

A question and answer session followed whereby further inquisitive reflections from students discussed the distribution of deposits, interest rate increase, credit growth and the economic crisis, Islamic finance, and young entrepreneurs and credit.

Is Entrepreneurship a Learnable Skill or an Inner Trait?

Al Akhawayn students got a chance to give their career a different kind of nudge during a conference on "Entrepreneurship in Morocco: Challenges and Opportunities", organized by Al Akhawayn Career Services, on November 27, 2012.

The Career Services entrepreneurship conference is designed to orient students to the track of entrepreneurship and start-up after graduation, through presentations by experienced and young entrepreneurs. Al Akhawayn alumni entrepreneurs as well as young entrepreneurs from the Ifrane region constituted the panel board at the conference. The panelists shared their stories and discussed the challenges and opportunities they faced in building their different enterprises.



Panelists Khadija Idrissi Janati ('04), Charif Houachmi ('00), Hamza Amor, Houda Guessous, and Abdelillah Benkassoud are all young entrepreneurs who made their way into the business world respectively through communication and media, real estate consulting, online IT and marketing, finance consulting and transportation, and the 2007 Moroccan Challengers Competition (winner).

The panelists walked student attendance through their academic backgrounds, their business missions, the steps they followed to start their projects, and the factors that had an impact on their experiences. Despite the diversity of the panelists experiences, they all agreed that in the field of entrepreneurship one should be armed with enough experience and skills, start small and grow slowly but surely, hire the right people, diversify revenues, think about their customers, have a vision, a mission, and values, and be ready for trial and failure.

Spotlights

Al Akhawayn Alumna **Houda Chakiri** ('03) featured in an article entitled "Think Steve Jobs: 10 Emerging Tech Women In The Middle East You Should Know About" published in the *International Business Times* following her participation in the TechWomen program.

Brian Seilstad, Lecturer at Al Akhawayn University Language Center, published an article entitled "Using Tailor-Made Youtube Videos as a Preteaching Strategy for English Language Learners in Morocco: Towards a Hybrid Language Learning Course" in the *Journal of Teaching English with Technology*, 12(4), 31-47

Nicolas Hamelin, Assistant Professor of Marketing and Management at Al Akhawayn School of Business Administration, published the article "'Faking brands': Consumer responses to counterfeiting" in the *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. **Sonny Nwankwo** and **Rachad El Hadouchi** co-authored the article. doi: 10.1002/cb.1406

New publication by **Eric Ross**, Associate Professor of International Studies at Al Akhawayn School of Humanities and Social Sciences: Ross, Eric. *Christmas in Cambérène, or How Muhammad Begets Jesus in Senegal, in Muslims and Others in Sacred Space*. Edited by Margaret Cormack. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Al Akhawayn alumnus **Tariq Nesh-Nash** ('99) conceived and launched, [www.mamdawrinch.com](#), the first Moroccan website to map bribery and corruption in the country. Nesh-Nash built the site with *Transparency Maroc* and presented the platform during the organization's recent conference, @ctivate, in Mohammedia, Morocco, on October 8, 2012.

Faouzi Jouti ('15), Engineering student at Al Akhawayn, has reached the finals in the *Google Apps Developer Challenge 2012* in the MENA region. Jouti's project, *LocalEDU*, represents Morocco and competes against *Signal Flow Graph Solver* project (Egypt), and *We-Cloud* (Algeria). *LocalEDU* is a web application which aims at providing a better learning environment for students, professors, the school, and the ministry of education personnel. The results of the competition will be announced on November 12, 2012.

Minister Ahmed Toufiq Guest Speaker at Function Honoring Students on the President's List

Al Akhawayn President Driss Ouaouicha together with His Excellency Ahmed Toufiq, Moroccan Minister of Religious Endowments and Islamic Affairs, recognized more than 90 outstanding students who have been named to the President's List for Spring 2012 during a ceremony on December 13, 2012.

Al Akhawayn University offers a comprehensive education based on the Liberal Arts model. It regularly encourages and honors high academic achievements. Students with a semester grade-point average (GPA) of 4.0 (highest grade) are named to the President's List. The Spring 2012 President's List comprises more than 90 students including 26 members of the first MAIS cohort.



Present at the ceremony were also Al Akhawayn executives, faculty, and students of the first cohort of the recently-launched Master of Arts in Islamic Studies (MAIS). Keynote speaker His Excellency Minister Ahmed Toufiq interacted with Al Akhawayn students on various contemporary issues. Questions and answers revolved around extremism, the role of logic in religion, the reasons for studying comparative religion at Al Akhawayn University, and the past religious traditions with a comparison to today's needs. Minister Toufiq reflected on his Ministry's vision to train, through the new MAIS at Al Akhawayn, a new type of religious scholars and imams who will have a specialist knowledge of the religious sciences, complemented by a broad understanding of contemporary culture, the humanities and social sciences, and the liberal arts. The MAIS at Al Akhawayn is intended to answer this need and to provide a general understanding of the world today and the role of religion within it.

Launched in Fall 2010, Al Akhawayn's Master of Arts in Islamic Studies is a graduate degree designed to provide students with an advanced knowledge of issues related to Islam and the role of religion in society. The program, offered by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, focuses on the study of religion from the perspective of the social sciences and humanities rather than from the perspective of theology or religious doctrine. Students select one of two tracks within the master's degree: (1) Islamic Studies, which is designed for students whose academic background is outside Islamic studies, or (2) Religious Studies, which is designed for students who already have a strong background in Islamic studies. Graduates of the MAIS program should be able to: (1) understand and analyze the role of religion in the contemporary global context; (2) understand the origins and development of Islam since the seventh century; (3) understand how Islam is situated in the 21st century global community; and (4) engage in sophisticated inter-religious dialogue both within and outside of the Muslim world.

Al Akhawayn University Mission: Enhancing Morocco and Engaging the World.

Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane is an independent, public, not-for-profit, coeducational, Moroccan university committed to educating future citizen-leaders of Morocco and the world through a globally oriented, English-language, liberal arts curriculum based on the American system.

The university enhances Morocco and engages the world through leading-edge educational and research programs, including continuing and executive education, upholds the highest academic and ethical standards, and promotes equity and social responsibility.



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