

Al Akhawayn President's speech to new students and parents
Thursday 05 February 1431, corresponding to January 21, 2010

Dear parents and students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to welcome you all to Al Akhawayn University and thank you for the trust that you put into this young university, whose founder the late King Hassan II, may God have mercy on his soul, and present custodian, His Majesty King Mohammed VI, wanted a beacon contributing to the building of tomorrow's Morocco through training, education, scientific research and development.

I congratulate the students for passing all their tests with success, which were not at all easy by the way. We thank God who enabled us, thanks to the efforts of everyone to open an additional residential facility downtown and provide housing for all those who need it.

By coming to Al Akhawayn University, you have made the right choice, as this University enjoys many characteristics that students seek abroad. By opting for the American system of education, you have opted for a system that has established itself on the world scene today. The majority of university ranking organizations today place American and British universities in the first positions.

Many of these features exist at Al Akhawayn, namely:

- 1- State-of-the-art facilities: (modern laboratories and a library with electronic databases;
- 2- Modern curricula constantly evolving to include the latest in addition to pioneering research centers;
- 3- A flexible educational system with a liberal arts component, adapted to the student's academic orientation, under the guiding supervision of the best Moroccan and international faculty;
- 4- An appropriate environment for students to practice a wide range of sports, cultural and social activities;
- 5- A motivated administrative team, ready to help students and who rejoice in their success and excellence;
- 6- Control over more than 80% of University budget, charges paid by students representing 60 % of the real cost;

7. A Board of Trustees made up of the political and economic elite of the country overseeing university progress.

Dear students,

You have come to a system that allows you a wide range of choices among classes, faculty, roommates and majors. This freedom of choice comes with even greater responsibility, which makes you better prepared for the world of tomorrow. A world that requires communication skills and personal initiative and holds everyone accountable based on their results.

The first stage of your education at the University – after the Language Center for those who need remedial English classes – will be the Center for Academic Development and Study Skills, which will be in charge of teaching you the basic learning skills in a variety of areas needed for success in modern education. These include desktop research, the use of technology in self-learning, personal initiative, teamwork and interaction with other cultures. This is a major step that strengthens your knowledge and provides you with a sound foundation for your choice of major ahead.

Your confidence in Al Akhawayn University is confidence in your nation, which itself starts by having confidence in yourselves. Where there is faith and will, there is a way. But self-confidence does not mean despising the other or rejecting them. Al Akhawayn University was founded on a number of values, namely, tolerance, multiculturalism and interaction with the other.

So please be open to every new concept to grasp its meaning, tolerant and understanding towards those who may hold a different opinion or be of a different religion or race from you. Take advantage of the opportunity to deepen your understanding of others and to help them learn the truth about our culture.

In this University, you will come across people of different countries and cultures. You have a unique opportunity to learn about new cultures while preserving your own identity, which is the ideal example of a moderation in today's world of globalization.

Now I am addressing the international students among us who have come from outside Morocco. This year we have students from the US, Canada, Japan, Oman, Germany, Finland and Mauritania. They will join others from different countries to take advantage of this educational opportunity. I hope that you will spend a fruitful semester and that you will learn about and understand Moroccan culture. We are expecting the same thing from our 47 students currently on exchange in other universities in the US, Europe and Asia, living another experience with students from other cultures, to broaden their horizons and qualify them to work and interact in different settings.

I hope that once back home, you will talk about your positive experience in the land of tolerance and coexistence and be convinced that co-existence among different peoples is not only possible, but also useful in a world where economic, cultural and information borders are

being dismantled as testified by the recent financial crisis.

Dear students,

You have a unique opportunity to take advantage of all the possibilities available to you. In addition to class hours, library, research and laboratory time, you will have the chance to take part in various student activities. Sports, cultural and club activities shape the personality and develop your hidden capabilities, as does participation in student clubs by serving the community and giving 60 hours of your time in community service as a graduation requirement in fields such as contributing to the literacy of young rural girls, helping residents of student centers and the economic empowerment of women, among other areas. These are all great deeds that make students useful members in their society, training them to shoulder a social responsibility based on mutually exchanged benefits.

Dear parents,

Your sons and daughters have now reached a stage of maturity that also entails certain responsibilities. For them to assume these responsibilities, you should give them the necessary room for maneuver while keeping an eye on them from a distance and holding them accountable to their acts. Freedom and responsibility go together and none can survive without the other in a sound environment. With the right choice and voting comes the obligation of maturity and responsibility.

However, there is no such thing as absolute freedom. Every community has rules that define rights and obligations. Students at Al Akhawayn University have the right to dignity, equal treatment and an excellent education. But students also have the obligation to respect others, observe University and community rules and do their best to attain the best results.

As much as we all stand in your support, we are equally responsible for applying the law of the land and the University regulations with justice and rigor. Only thus can we live in a community that promotes noble human values and provides students with a unique educational experience to build their future and contribute to building their society.

Finally, I would like to reiterate my congratulations to parents and welcoming for the new students.

By choosing Al Akhawayn University, you have chosen the opportunities it offers and the obligations it requires; the obligation to constantly work hard towards success and excellence so that the University may improve its ranking among international universities. The latest ranking provided by Spain's Webometrics ranked the University in the 15th position in Africa and 1st in the country thanks to the efforts of faculty, students and the administration. We will work with you in the next few years to occupy similar and better positions in other systems and ranking organizations.

May God help us all for the good of our sons and daughters, and our country.
Thank you.