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Finding Balance in the Middle East
Dartmouth-American University of Kuwait Internship Program

The overarching theme of my time in Kuwait was finding balance. While it took a moment to settle into a routine with my different internship placements, I ended up really appreciating the balance between my independent or asynchronous English research and the opportunity to interact with students and faculty every day in the Counseling and Writing and Tutoring Centers. Having focused on English literature and creative writing while completing my English major at Dartmouth, conducting English language research on the benefits and challenges of increasing English-mediated instruction (EMI) in higher education across the Gulf countries introduced me to a completely new side of the English discipline, intersecting with my interest and course experience in linguistic anthropology, and prompted me to constantly reflect on my position as a native-English speaker working with students with a wide range of linguistic backgrounds at an American university in Kuwait. Being able to listen to and learn about the diversity of experiences of students at AUK through the Writing and Counseling Centers really helped me develop a more nuanced understanding of the role of language in education and in our everyday lives in general. I am incredibly grateful to the other student writing consultants that I got to know during my internship at the Writing Center for always being so welcoming and so willing and excited to help me practice my very beginner Arabic, a completely new language to me, and teaching me about the many different dialects spoken in Kuwait. Though every article I read for my research during my internship described English as the international 'lingua franca' of academia, and I was often asked why I was so eager to learn Arabic when everyone at AUK spoke English, practicing Arabic became a wonderful way to connect with my fellow writing consultants that I looked forward to every day and reinforced my belief that learning a new language encourages you to think and see the world differently.

As an intern in the Counseling Center, my primary role was providing one-on-one peer support to three students with different forms of autism for their self-identified social and academic goals. Though I was initially nervous about holding counseling sessions for the first time, especially when I myself was new to the social culture at AUK and was unsure how to navigate the peer counselor-student dynamic or how to best support the students' social goals, practicing skills to reduce social anxiety and improve time management in our sessions taught me a lot about the universal and flexible nature of these tools and reminded me to implement them in my own life while acclimating to an unfamiliar environment. Through our sessions, I learned that one of the most important ways that you can be a support system for someone else is to empower them to view themselves as capable of achieving their own personal goals. It was truly a privilege to get to know each student that I worked with, both in the Counseling and

Writing Centers, and seeing them reach their social and academic goals was the most rewarding part of my internship experience at AUK.

Interning at AUK has had a huge impact on my future academic and professional aspirations. Though I had initially come into college planning on studying English and neuroscience and had structured my first three years at Dartmouth around that path, interning in the Counseling Center and the Writing & Tutoring Center at the American University of Kuwait during my off-term this fall motivated me to pursue and declare a psychology major in place of the neuroscience minor. Supporting AUK students with both their mental health and academics this fall has shown me that, while I was purely pursuing the neuroscience minor because I was fascinated by the the content, I am actually really passionate about working in a psychology-related field after graduation, intersecting with my interests in education and English language and literature teaching, and that I have so much more that I can learn if I want to continue working with students in higher education.

One of the aspects which first drew me to the AUK internship program was the work-life balance which previous interns shared that they found in Kuwait. I loved being able to go to AUK at a set time each morning and put all of my effort into my work while I was on campus and still be able to cook breakfast and dinner for myself and go to the beach every day to read a book (just for fun!) and watch every sunset while the whole city seems to thrum with the overlapping calls to prayer. Though it genuinely felt like our time in Kuwait flew by so quickly, I also think we were able to appreciate the unique place that we were living and working in by balancing becoming familiar with our new home in Salmiya and exploring different parts of the country and the region. I will never be able to properly express how thankful I am to have had this experience, which pushed me every day to be more independent and to learn a little more about a different culture and way of life.



Mariam and I on my last day in the Writing Center



Our view of the sunset from our apartment balcony



Yasmine and I camel-riding in Sharjah on our trip to the UAE



The spot where I read every day on the beach next to AUK



Alex, Yasmine and I at Kuwait Towers at the end of our first week at AUK



Marvelling at the Burj Khalifa in Dubai