



## International Advisory Board

# Newsletter

No. 6/2007-08

September 15, 2008

### From the Secretary-General

I am pleased to report that we had a very successful meeting of the IAB in London from August 24-26, 2008. During the first day following the introductory session where we presented developments and highlights of the University, detailed discussions were held on faculty recruitment and attrition.

The Board on the second day reviewed the document on "KFUPM Research Structure and Strategy." The Board took particular interest in the MIT-KFUPM collaboration and the Centers of Research Excellence.

We also had the pleasure of several of our colleagues attending the meeting and interacting with the Board members. They were impressed by the quality of deliberations, and found them to be thorough and insightful. We plan to have even greater participation of faculty, students, and university officials in future meetings.

The Board members had the pleasure and honor to meet with HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf bin Abdulaziz, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the UK and Ireland, who graciously invited them to a dinner in the Embassy on August 25, 2008.

The IAB meeting was widely covered in the local media.

I am pleased to invite you to visit us at our new website [www.kfupm.edu.sa/iab](http://www.kfupm.edu.sa/iab), which has been recently launched. I look forward to receiving your valuable comments and suggestions.

A brief report on the deliberations of the meeting is presented in this newsletter.

*Khattab G. Al-Hinai*



IAB Members in the London meeting

Seated from left: Henry Rosvosky, Abdullah Jum'ah, Martin Jischke, Khaled Al-Sultan, Choon Fong Shih and John Etchemendy.  
Standing from left: Khattab Al-Hinai, Mohamed. Al-Madi, Tony Meggs, John Rice, Andrew Gould, David O'Riley and Hugo Sonnenschein.

## **The Fourth Meeting of the Board**

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All the members except Wayne Clough were present for the meeting. In March 2008, Wayne Clough, then President of Georgia Tech, joined the Smithsonian Institution as its 12<sup>th</sup> Secretary. Smithsonian policy precludes him from serving on outside boards, such as the IAB.

The other University officials present in the meeting were:

Dr. Faleh Al-Sulaiman, Vice-Rector for Technology Development and Industrial Relations,  
Dr. Mamdouh Najjar, Dean of Faculty & Personnel Affairs  
Dr. Omar Al-Suwailem, Dean of Admissions & Registration,  
Dr. Mohammad Al-Homoud, Dean of Scientific Research,  
Dr. Samir Al-Bayyat, Dean of Engineering,  
Dr. Walid Al-Sabah, Dean of Sciences, and  
Dr. Sulaiman Al-Khattaf, Director of the Center for Refining & Petrochemicals, and CoRE in Petroleum Refining & Petrochemicals

## **Highlights of the Meeting**

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Following the initial session where development and highlights of the University were presented, the first day was fully devoted to discussions on faculty recruitment and development. Dr. Mamdouh Najjar gave a detailed presentation on faculty demographics, the employment package, recent recruiting efforts and their outcome, benchmarks compared with US universities, etc.

To tap the most talented candidates, the members concluded, the employment process should be flexible and fast in execution. A suggestion was made that the University should invite potential candidates to campus to make them aware of the environment. It will be a positive step that will encourage new faculty to join. The members also recommended conducting case studies of faculty that the University had lost, but wanted to retain, and what could be done to redress the situation.

The Board noted that the student exchange program should be expanded to have more student participation. For all-around growth of students, it was reiterated that more courses in humanities and social sciences should be introduced. The students

should also be encouraged to take in addition to courses in science and engineering some courses in those disciplines when they go abroad under exchange programs.

The MIT-KFUPM collaboration and the Centers of Research Excellence were two important initiatives that were of particular interest to the Board. The University has signed an agreement with MIT for a seven-year research and educational program. The joint program will lead to the creation of the KFUPM Center for Clean Water and Clean Energy at MIT.

About 30 MIT faculty and a number of post-docs will be involved in projects during the first year, with a similar number participating at KFUPM. In addition, faculty and graduate students from KFUPM will have the opportunity to spend one or two semesters at MIT, and faculty from MIT will also regularly visit KFUPM.

The second day was devoted to discussion on research structure and strategy and general issues. The University engaged a consultant to conduct a detailed study on the current KFUPM research structure and program, and suggest a change plan with timelines for implementation. Review of this area, which is ongoing, has been necessitated by recent developments at the national and the University levels and emerging trends and challenges.

The discussions centered on how KFUPM does high quality research while addressing the national priorities. The balance between fundamental and applied research should be maintained based on mission and vision, national needs, and optimum capabilities.

## **Next Meeting**

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The next meeting of the IAB is scheduled for January 10-11, 2009 in Riyadh, and is to be hosted by SABIC.

The agenda includes an update on the faculty development process, research strategy, an update on MIT-KFUPM collaboration and on the Centers of Research Excellence, and presentations of key performance indicators to benchmark progress as well as presentations by researchers on selected projects to give an idea about breadth and depth of research activity at the University.

## **Note**

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Should you have any comments or suggestions, please let us know.