



# Championing the Liberal Arts in the GCC Countries

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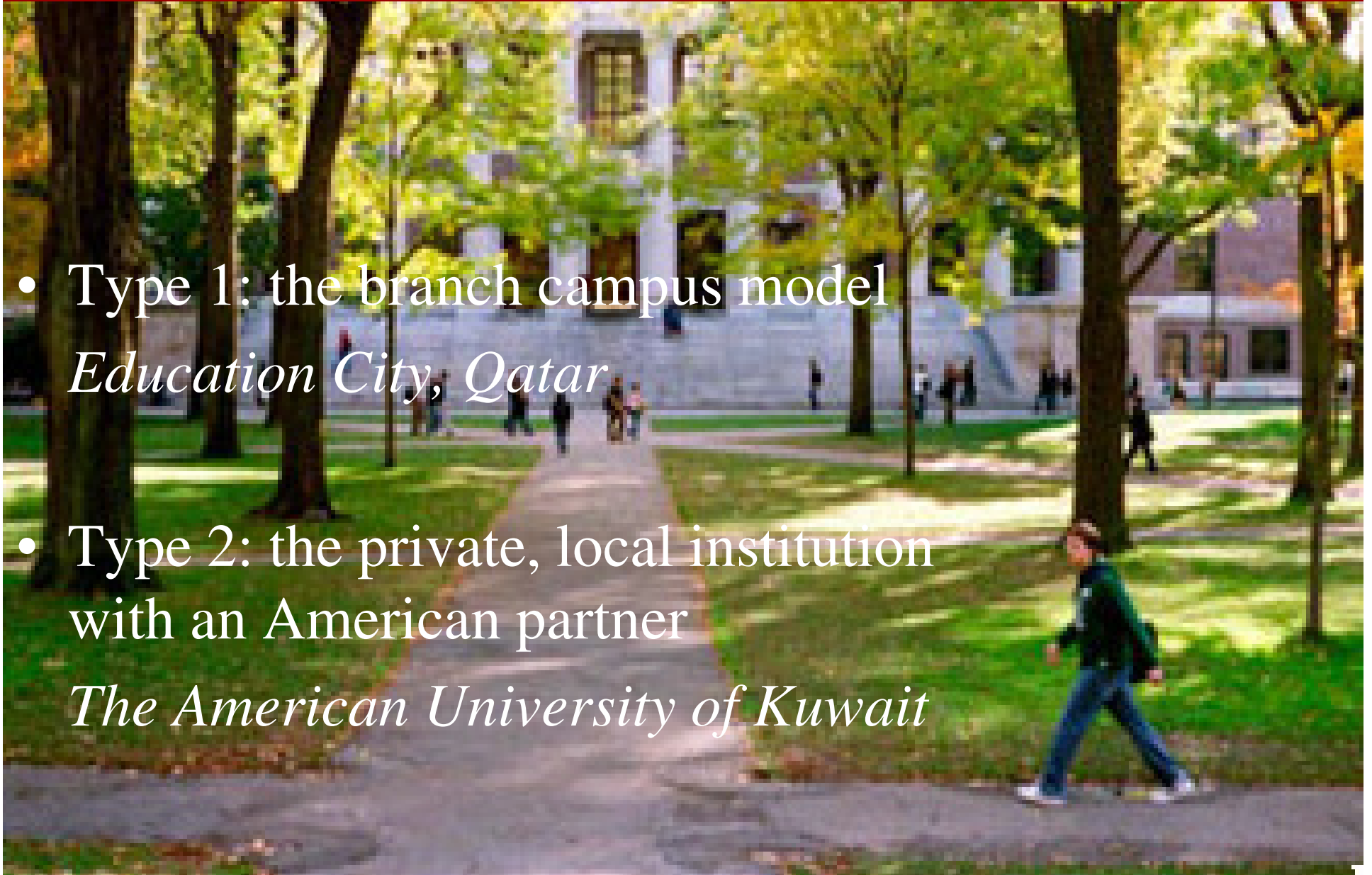
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# Intercultural Education in the GCC

- GCC countries seek to develop “knowledge economies” to reduce their dependence on oil
- Gulf higher education was historically dominated by the European model
- Today, the American model is increasingly but *selectively* emulated

# Two Versions of the American Model in the GCC

- Type 1: the branch campus model  
*Education City, Qatar*
- Type 2: the private, local institution  
with an American partner  
*The American University of Kuwait*



# Model 1: Education City, Qatar

- Community of institutions, K-12 to post-graduate
- Participation takes form of “branch campuses” of leading US institutions
- Specific programs are imported, not the entire (liberal arts) approach
- Entirely state-funded



## Model 2: The American University of Kuwait

*Independent, Kuwaiti owned institution,  
partnered with Dartmouth College*

- Holistic liberal arts curriculum
- Scholar-teacher instructional faculty
- Student-centered pedagogy
- Community involvement

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a black headband and a brown blazer, is speaking to a group of students in a classroom. The students are seated at desks, and one student in the foreground is wearing a white hijab. The background is slightly blurred, showing a classroom setting with windows.

AUK is the only  
institution in GCC  
committed to the liberal  
arts curriculum

- ✓ Multi- and interdisciplinary general education
- ✓ Diverse, continuous student-instructor interaction
- ✓ Broad access to learning resources

# Multi- and Interdisciplinary Education

- Goal: breadth of knowledge
- 45cr General Education foundation
- Focus on critical thinking, communication skills, quantitative and scientific reasoning



Courses emphasize teamwork and mastery of technological skills necessary for lifelong learning



# Diverse Student-instructor Interaction (1)



**Faculty members Chris Ohan and Shareefa Al Adwani with AUK's award-winning delegation to the Harvard Model UN**



## Diverse Student-instructor Interaction (2)

Professor Urkevich takes a class to the suq



## Diverse Student-instructor Interaction (3)

Professor Elena Tsenkova  
plays a duet with a student



# Broad Access to Learning Resources

- Charter membership in AMICAL, the consortium of academic libraries of American- model universities abroad
- Travel for academic growth
- Speaker program of international stature
- Hi-tech, hi-touch: MIV and Moodle support instruction





# AUK Library: Bringing Reading to an Aural Culture



- Facilities include the embassy-supported “American Corner”
- Room for 60,000 books when collection development is complete
- Electronic access to 20,000 journals
- Multimedia-equipped conference room, group & individual study rooms, 36 individual computer-equipped carrels

# Travel for Academic Growth

## **FINC 389 Tours German Steel Plant**





Speaker Program: Students talk to President Jose Maria Olsen  
after a lecture on global warming





# Barriers to Implementing the American Model in the GCC

- Requirement for gender segregation
- Adherence to Islamic values
- Lack of transferable credit transfer system
- Limitations on academic freedom
- Restrictive institutional licensure system
- Rushed accreditation process, pressure to gain US regional & international accreditations
- Mandatory for-profit status in some countries

## Achieving a balance...

*Dynamics of knowledge production invite a search for strategies to balance*

- Flexibility, diversity of the American liberal arts curriculum,
- International standards of quality assurance, and
- Responsiveness to local needs.

## CONCLUSION

**To replicate the success of the American model in the US, GCC-based institutions must**

- **assess the applicability of these institutional frameworks & academic approaches to the local sociocultural context**
- **create compatible regulatory infrastructure (e.g., a transferable credit system)**





# LIBERAL ARTS CONFERENCE: CALL FOR PAPERS

**American University of Kuwait (AUK)  
4th ANNUAL LIBERAL ARTS CONFERENCE**

**Higher Education in the GCC: Emerging Trends and Models  
26 and 27 April 2009**

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Professor Dale F. Eickelman, Ralph and Richard Lazarus Professor of Anthropology and Human Relations, Dartmouth College**

## ***For Prospective Presenters***

**Send 500 word abstract to [libarts@auk.edu.kw](mailto:libarts@auk.edu.kw) by January 5, 2009 for review by an Academic Committee on the basis of academic merit and consistency with the theme of the conference. Decisions will be made by February 5, 2009. Accepted papers must be submitted by April 5, 2009.**

## ***Contact Information***

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