WOMEN OF OMAN: CHANGING ROLES & TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCE

Hosted by Kennesaw State University
November 7, 2014
Modern Oman, Modern Values

Oman is increasingly calling upon women to shape its future and the future of the region.

The 2014 ‘Year of the Arabian Peninsula’ Conference, Women of Oman: Changing Roles and Transnational Influence, addresses how the participation of women in public life contributes to positive social change in Oman. While social and legal challenges remain for Omani women, as they do for women across the globe, an estimated one-third of all civil servants in Oman are women, and more Omani women than men pursue a university education.

In March 2004, Oman’s first female minister was appointed to head the ministry of higher education. Women’s empowerment enhances educational achievement and economic productivity, reduces infant mortality, and contributes to improved health and nutrition.

The organizers of this conference hold that increasing the participation of women in all manners of decision making is crucial to advancing human development.

H.E. Ambassador Hunaina Al Mughairy was appointed as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Sultanate of Oman to the United States of America on December 2, 2005. She also serves as Chair of the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center’s Board of Oversight. Ambassador Al Mughairy is an economist with an extensive business background. She is a strong advocate for the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement and has focused much of her energy on improving relations between the U.S. and Oman. As the first woman to represent an Arab country as an ambassador in Washington, Ambassador Al Mughairy has worked to improve the image of Arab women in the United States. Prior to her work in diplomacy, she served many roles in Oman’s Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Omani Center for Investment Promotion & Export Development. Ambassador Al Mughairy obtained a B.A in Business Communications from the High Polytechnical Institute in Cairo, and an M.A in Economics from New York University, New York.

H.E. Dr. Rawya Saud Al Busaidi earned her PHD from Oxford University. She is the first woman in Oman to be appointed to full ministerial rank, and has held the post of Minister of Higher Education from March 2004, when she was also appointed as Chair of the Sultan Qaboos University Council and Deputy Chair of the Council of Higher Education. Other key posts currently held by Her Excellency include that of Deputy Chair of Oman’s new Science Research Council, and Chair of the Board of the College of Law. She has initiated major projects for reforming and improving the quality of Education in Oman, including a Strategic Plan for Education in the Sultanate for the period 2006-2020, as well as a project to convert five of Oman’s government Colleges of Education to institutions specializing in a range of programs selected to reflect the growing diversification of Oman’s economy. She is also active in the Gulf Cooperation Council region where she leads a project to develop standards for the professions, as well as a regional Quality Assurance network.

H.H. Dr. Mona bint Fahad Al Said, Assistant Vice Chancellor of International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), is in charge of all international activities at the university. Her mission is to initiate and build solid collaborations with top educational institutions around the world and help position SQU among the elite ranked universities. She graduated from the College of Education in the English Department at SQU in 1993, followed by a Master’s degree in Curriculum and Teaching methods at the same university. H.H. Dr. Al Said completed her Ph.D. at Kings College, London in 2005 in Special Education Needs and Policy. She has developed relationships with various universities around the world by means of joint conferences, research initiatives, and student exchanges. H.H. Dr. Al Said is the patron of several social initiatives in the Sultanate, including the Children’s Public Library, the Children’s Association, and the National Association for Cancer. She is a supporter of issues related to education, woman, and children.

Keynote Speakers

Conference Sponsor

The Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center (SQCC) is dedicated to educating the peoples of the United States and Oman about the breadth and richness of the two cultures. SQCC promotes mutual respect and understanding between the two and strives to educate a new generation of culturally sensitive and knowledgeable citizens through outreach, scholarships, lectures, educational resources, cultural partnerships, and the Cultural Center in Washington, DC. SQCC brings the culture, history, and heritage of both nations to audiences in the US and abroad.
# Conference Agenda

## Student Posters and Volunteers

*Women in Leadership Class, “Hijab for a Day” Survey, Model Arab League, LINK: Student Leadership Program*

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<td>8:30-9:00am</td>
<td>Prillaman Atrium</td>
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| 9:00-9:30am    | Prillaman 1000       | Welcoming Remarks
Ken Harmon, KSU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, and H.E. Hunaina Sultan Al Mughairy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman |
| 9:30-10:45am   | Prillaman 1000       | Opening Keynote Address & Special Session
“Women Leading Progress in Oman”
H.E. Dr. Rawya Saud Al Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education, Sultanate of Oman
H.H. Dr. Mona bint Fahad Al Said, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Sultan Qaboos University |
| 10:45-11:00am  | Prillaman Atrium       | Coffee Break
Special Session
“Women in the Public and Private Spheres”
Dr. Unni Wikan, Professor of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo
Christine Eickelman, Research Associate, Dartmouth College
Ms. Hamdah Al Shamsi, Assistant General Manager, Administration and Finance, The Public Authority for Social Insurance
Moderator: Mazida Khan, Instructor of Interdisciplinary Studies, Kennesaw State University |
| 11:00-12:30pm  | Prillaman 1000       | Lunch (By Invitation Only)                                          |
| 12:30-2:00pm   | Student Center Rooms C, D, & E | Lunch (By Invitation Only)                                          |
| 2:00-3:15pm    | Prillaman 1000       | Special Session
“Women, Health, & Sports in Oman”
Christie Emerson, Senior Lecturer, WellStar School of Nursing, KSU
H.H. Dr. Khoula Al Said, Senior Consultant, Royal Hospital, Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman
Ms. Saada Al Ismaeli, Director of Women Sports, Ministry of Sports |
| 6:30-7:00pm    | Zuckerman Museum      | Photography Exhibit                                                 |
| 7:00-8:30pm    | Bailey Performance Center | Performances by Oud Hobbyists Association and Al Najoom Dance Troupe |
Evening Performances

Following the conference, the evening concludes with two opportunities to experience authentic Omani culture. The Zuckerman Art Museum is hosting a photography exhibit at 6:30pm. At 7:00pm, attendees who pre-registered will be treated to a concert in the Bailey Performance Center featuring the Oud Hobbyists Association and Al Najoom Dance Troupe.

The Photography Exhibit features work from two prominent Omani photographers: Hamed bin Salam Al Sulaimi and Rasha Saud Al Abdali. Mr. Al Sulaimi is a member of the Optical Imaging Society in Oman, the International Federation of Photographic Art (FIAP), and the American Society of Optical Imaging. His awards include the medal of Crown 2 from the FIAP, and the gold medal from the Southpuntom International Competition in 2011. Ms. Al Abdali is a member of the Oman Photo Association and the Photo Society at Sultan Qaboos University. She was chosen as one of 40 Omani Artists for Excellency during the 40th National Day Celebration. Ms. Al Abdali has also volunteered her time as supervisor of the Photo Society at SQU since 2005.

The Oud Hobbyists Association promotes the musical heritage of Oman. The Oud (lute) is a fascinating musical instrument that has long been a source of pride for kings, princes and especially poets. There are many interesting legends about the instrument’s origins. The word “oud” is derived from the Arabic word referring to the type of wood from which it is made. It has five double-strings (i.e. ten single-fretted strings) and sometimes more. The musician uses a “feather” tool to strike the strings while playing.

Al Najoom Dance Troupe hails originally from Ja’alan Bani Bu Ali, an oasis market town in Oman. Traditional Omani music has a long legacy, where the indigenous Arab Islamic culture has combined with external influences from Oman’s trading partners in East Africa and Asia. The troupe are recognized not only for the skill of their musicians and the quality of their singing, but also for the energy and exuberance that they bring to each performance.

Additional Conference Speakers

H.H. Dr. Khoula Al Said serves as Senior Consultant of Paediatric Gastroenterology at the Royal Hospital in Oman. Prior to that, she was a Pediatric Gastroenterology Fellow at Alberta Children’s Hospital. She earned both her MD (1998) and Bachelor of Science degree (1995) from the College of Medicine at Sultan Qaboos University. H.H. Dr. Al Said is also Associate Designated Official of Post Graduate Medical Education at the Royal Hospital and the Child Health Program Director for the Oman Medical Specialty Board. She was a Fellow at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in Pediatrics (2006), and a Fellow at the American Academy of Pediatrics (2004). She has served on a number of healthcare committees, including the Ministry of Health Liver Transplant Committee, The Royal Hospital Child Protection Committee, and the Oman National Liver Transplant Committee.

Dr. Unni Wikan was awarded the prestigious Norwegian Freedom of Expression Award in 2004 for “her insightful, openhearted and challenging contributions to the public debate on the value conflicts in multicultural societies.” She has studied sociology at the University of Oslo (1963-66), social anthropology at the University of Bergen (1967-68) and Arabic at the American University in Cairo (1968-69). She is the author of Behind the Veil in Arabia: Women in Oman (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). Dr. Wikan has been a visiting professor at many universities across the world, among them Harvard and the University of Chicago, USA; Beersheba University, Israel; L´ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), Paris; and London School of Economics (LSE). Dr. Wikan has conducted fieldwork in Egypt, Oman, Yemen, Indonesia, Bhutan and the Nordic countries.


Ms. Hamdah Said Al Shamsi is Assistant General Manager for Administration and Finance at The Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI), a position she has held since February 2010. She has extensive experience in finance, accounting, human resource development, and administration. Ms. Al Shamsi earned her Master’s degree in Business in Professional Accounting from Victoria University of Technology, Australia, and her Bachelor of Science degree in Office Administration from University of South Carolina. She has held various roles, including being a member of the PASI senior management team, advising the General Manager, and participating in strategic discussion and planning. Ms. Al Shamsi is also a columnist for the Business Section of the Oman Daily Newspaper; a blogger, trainer; and speaker, and has published two books.

Ms. Saada bint Salim bin Mohammed Al Ismaili became Director of the Women’s Sport Department at the Ministry of Sports Affairs in Muscat, Oman in 2006. She received her Master’s of Science degree in Leisure Management from the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, in 2010, and her Bachelor of Arts degree in Acting and Drama from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in 1992. She has held various positions including Board Member of Oman Olympic Committee, Director of the second Gulf Volleyball Women’s Championship 2013, and Chairman of the Committee for Women’s Basketball.
H.H. Dr. Mona bint Fahad Al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor of International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University, is in charge of all international activities at the university. Her mission is to initiate and build solid collaborations with top educational institutions around the world and help position SQU among the elite ranked universities. She graduated from the College of Education in the English Department at SQU in 1993, followed by a Master’s degree in Curriculum and Teaching methods at the same university. H.H. Dr. Al Said completed her Ph.D. at Kings College, London in 2005 in Special Education Needs and Policy. She has developed relationships with various universities around the world by means of joint conferences, research initiatives, and student exchanges. H.H. Dr. Al Said is the patron of several social initiatives in the Sultanate, including the Children’s Public Library, the Children’s Association, and the National Association for Cancer. She is a significant supporter of issues related to education, woman, and children.

HE Dr. Ali Al Bimani is Fifth-Vice Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University and an academic with an impressive research record that includes over 70 publications. These include scientific papers in international journals, encyclopedia entries, conference proceedings, and technical reports for organizations in Oman and overseas.

He completed doctoral studies at the University of Southern California in 1992 before being appointed as an engineer with Petroleum Development Oman. From there, Dr Al Bimani next moved to Sultan Qaboos University. During his years of service with the University, Dr. Al Bimani has worked as Head of the Department of Petroleum and Chemical Engineering, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor for Postgraduate Studies and Research, and as Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Community Service. February 2008 marked his promotion by Royal Decree to his current position as the University’s Fifth Vice-Chancellor.

Dr. Hilal Bin Ali Al Sabti is the Head of Cardiothoracic Surgery and Senior Consultant Cardiothoracic Surgeon at the Department of Surgery in Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. He is a graduate of Bachelor of Health Sciences and has obtained his MD Degree in the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Sultan Qaboos University. He is the first North American Omani Graduate of the Cardiac Surgery Full Residency Program with Canadian Royal College Certification. His lifetime achievements include being the Founder and Establisheer of Cardiothoracic Surgery Division in Sultan Qaboos University Hospital; performing the first Thoracab in Oman and Middle East (Multiple Vessels Grafting through Thoracotomy); Founder and Heart Team Leader in the first Trans catheter aortic valve implantation (TA VI) in Oman; the first Omani to attend Leadership for Physician Executive’s course in Harvard Medical School in 2009; and the first Omani physician to attend the Oxford University Strategic Leadership Program in November 2013. He is actively involved in teaching, research, and community services, and is a member of many committees and associations in and out of SQU, SQUH and Oman. Dr. Hilal Bin Ali Al-Sabti is the former Deputy Director General for Clinical Affairs in Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

Mr. Salahaddin Al Saadi, a graduate of BS Physics from Sultan Qaboos University in 2001, is currently the Acting Director of the Office of International Cooperation. He has interests in the ranking systems of universities and how SQU could benefit from the experience of other institutions in this area. He also wants to share interests in quality assurance and quality management. One of the main tasks of the International Cooperation Office is to extend collaborative initiatives with reputed universities nationally and internationally, where he plays a major role in following up with those initiatives and in the implementations of different joint projects.
KSU’s ‘Year of the Arabian Peninsula’

Women of Oman is the latest event in Kennesaw State University’s ‘Year of the Arabian Peninsula.’ Each academic year the University focuses a series of lectures, performances, exhibits and films on a specific country or world region. The events are linked to credit-earning special topics courses, and are all free and open to the public.

In October 2014, The ‘Year Of’ received the American Association of State Colleges and Universities award for excellence and innovation in international education. Kennesaw State has teamed up with key international and domestic partners to organize events that provide attendees with fascinating insights about real life in the Arabian Peninsula.

In addition to partnering with the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center on this conference and other events, the University also partnered with Alif Institute to host the KSU Arabian Festival, and with the Islamic Speakers Bureau on the Many Faces of the Hijab lecture and social experience.

About Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw State University is the third-largest university in the State of Georgia with more than 25,000 undergraduate and graduate students representing 135 countries.

Our campus is located in metropolitan Atlanta in one of the safest and most beautiful areas of the United States. KSU offers 80 bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degrees in education, health, business, humanities, arts, science and math. The university’s graduate degree programs include nursing, business, information systems, conflict management, public administration, education and professional writing. KSU has made global engagement a pillar of its institutional mission and strategic plan and was recently awarded the Senator Paul Simon award for comprehensive internationalization as a result.

In August of 2015, Kennesaw State University will consolidate with the nearby Southern Polytechnic State University and add more than 6,000 students and 30 degree programs in Science, Technology & Engineering.

Art of the Arabian Peninsula

One of the best ways to learn about another culture is to study its art. A variety of art exhibits will be on display on campus throughout the Year of Arabian Peninsula. Each exhibit reveals something different about the Arab experience.

Tolerance, Understanding, Coexistence: Oman’s Message of Islam

Religious freedom is a core value for the people of Oman. Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism are all practiced openly in the country. This exhibit features 24 displays with graphics and text describing religious practices in Oman. Visitors to the exhibit come away with a new understanding of what life is like in modern Oman.

This exhibit was on display in the Zuckerman Art Museum from Oct. 1-31, 2014, and came to Kennesaw State University thanks to Oman’s Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs. Before Kennesaw, it was on display in Brazil, Germany, Japan, and Spain.

Geometric Aljamia: A Cultural Transliteration

Since ancient times, geometric perfection (circles, squares, and triangles) has been thought to convey sacred and universal truths by reflecting the fractal interconnections of the natural world. Incorporating these patterns into works of art promotes access through recognition, and this commonality creates a connection. Geometric ornamentation may have reached a pinnacle in the Islamic world, where it has been assimilated into all aspects of everyday life. This exhibition examines an extended cross-cultural integration of the arts into life.

“Geometric Aljamia: A Cultural Transliteration” will be on display in the Zuckerman Art Museum from Nov. 16, 2014 through Feb. 21, 2015 in the Zuckerman Art Museum.

Featured artists include Mohammad Saleh Amin, Jorge Benitez, Reni Gower, Hanane Korchi, Tamin Sahebzada, and Julia Townsend.
Special Thanks

The conference organizers want to say thank you to all of the presenters, sponsors, community partners, students, faculty, and staff who came together to make this event a success.

A very special thank you goes out to Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center for their generous support of this conference and of the ‘Year of the Arabian Peninsula.’