



From the Secretary General

The sixth meeting of the International Advisory Board of the University was held August 3-4, 2009 at the Westin Palace in Madrid, Spain. Following a presentation on news and highlights on the various activities of the University and an update on actions taken on previous recommendations, the Board discussed agenda topics, which included research at KFUPM, innovation and technology transfer, the relationship of the Research Institute and the Dhahran Techno-Valley with industry, international collaborations, and the issues related to faculty attraction, retention and development.

It was heartening to note during the discussions that the Research Institute and Dhahran Techno-Valley are two firsts of the several that the University has achieved in the region.

The structure of the meeting was organized to allow adequate time for discussions. Keeping with the past practice, several top officials of the University were also invited to this meeting. They found the discussions and questions in the meeting to be focused and insightful. The varied experience of the educators and industry leaders, who form the membership in the Board, made many of the recommendations practical and actionable, as well as more relevant to helping KFUPM set its plans and priorities.

This newsletter presents a brief report on the topics discussed in the sixth meeting.

Khattab Al-Hinai



Seated from left: John Rice, Martin Jischke, Khaled Al-Sultan, and Henry Resovosky.
Standing from left: Khattab Al-Hinai, Choon Fong Shih, Kazuo Oike, Andrew Gould, and Hugo Sonnenschein.

Sixth Meeting of the International Advisory Board

Welcoming the Board members, Dr. Khaled Al-Sultan expressed his thanks to the members for the advisory role that the IAB is contributing in the University's activities for improvement of processes and enhancing its image.

Dr. Khattab G. Al-Hinai, Secretary General of the IAB, started the first session of discussions by presenting KFUPM achievements over the period that followed the 5th meeting that was held in January, as well as the recent academic, research, community and students' activities and developments.

The Board then reviewed the status and progress of scientific research at the University. Dr. Sahel Abduljawad, Vice-Rector for Applied Research, delivered a comprehensive presentation on research in which he itemized its organization, resources, types, tools, etc. He gave examples of the ongoing partnership programs between the University and the various local and global institutions and organizations.

The Board noted with interest the move to consolidate research activities (basic, sponsored, client-funded, and grants) under the Vice Rector for Research and Graduate Studies. This step has become necessary for continued improvement that the University always strives for, and to align research in KFUPM along the lines of national needs, current scientific developments, and the requirements of KFUPM partners and clients.

Dr. Faleh Al-Sulaiman, Vice Rector for Technology Development & Industrial Relations presented the ongoing activities and efforts that the University has been undertaking to achieve KFUPM's aims in developing, transferring and commercializing technology. The Board found the Dhahran Techno-Valley (DTV) to be an important initiative, and noted with interest the progress in King Abdullah Science Park and SciTech. For the business incubator, innovation and consulting services centers, commercial networking and marketing will be important ingredients for their success. It would be useful, therefore, to consider which skill sets are in place and which ones are still needed.

Over the second day of meetings, Dr. Martin Jischke, Chairman of the IAB, reviewed progress of the KFUPM-MIT Research Collaboration Program, which is off to a good start. Dr. Jischke also serves as the chairman of a consultative committee that was

specifically formed for this purpose. The research teams of the KFUPM-MIT Center for Clean Energy and Clean Water at MIT are making measurable progress, the educational initiatives are promising, and the teams at MIT and KFUPM are working together and well to meet the expectations and achieve the objectives of the program. The three recommendations of this international advisory committee were found to be very relevant in setting the future direction of the collaboration program. In particular, the Board endorsed the recommendation for greater immersion in the MIT research and academic culture and attention to how best to apply the experience in a focused way to benefit KFUPM.

The Board finally discussed a study prepared by the Dean of Faculty & Personnel, Dr. Mohammed A. Al-Khalidi. He reflected on the University's efforts in attracting academic and research talents, the outcome of the recruiting teams that visited the US, Canada and Europe, and efforts to recruit graduates from the most distinguished universities as well as in encouraging the distinguished graduates from King Abdullah Foreign Scholarship Program to work in academic departments at KFUPM. The Board found progress in adding needed faculty, for example, cutting lead times in faculty recruitment to be of particular interest. The compensation levels for faculty are now higher overall than in North America and Europe. The Board suggested further analysis of what factors, beyond compensation, could make the most difference and be useful. The plan to place post-doctoral fellows with faculty, researchers, centers, etc. is commendable. The Board further suggested expanding the plan to include more fellows at the doctoral or other graduate levels.

In the wrap-up session, the Board provided its recommendations in a practical form to help KFUPM set its plans and priorities accordingly.

The other University officials invited to attend the meetings were Dr. Sami Khaiyat, Supervisor of Technical Affairs, Dr. Mesfer Al-Zahrani, Dean of Student Affairs, and Dr. Halim Hamid Redhwi, Assistant Supervisor of Dhahran Techno-Valley.

Next Meeting

The seventh meeting of the IAB is scheduled for January 11-12, 2010 in Dhahran and Jeddah. The Board proposed visiting King Abdullah University of Science & Technology during the meeting.