

The PFDP News

Palestinian Faculty Development Program

September 2010 No. 5

In this issue

This issue of PFDP News profiles the 2010 winners of the Teaching Excellence Awards. We also feature the recently held annual Academic Colloquium. As usual we report on our recent PhD graduates and activities related to our faculty grants. This issue also describes two new activities, the MA Scholarships in Education and the support for Centers for Teaching Excellence. We hope you enjoy this update and look forward to hearing from you.

Teaching Excellence Awards

These awards honor exemplary performance and service to Palestinian higher education and the process required of the applicant is rigorous. Applications call for faculty who can demonstrate superior commitment to teaching, who use especially effective teaching strategies, and who have inspired notable achievements by former students. The process began with an independent panel of faculty members that reviewed the complete dossier of the nominees using a point ranking system. This dossier had to include a statement by the nominee on teaching philosophy, a CV, two letters of support from students, two letters of support from colleagues, other items that document excellence in teaching, and a summary of student evaluations from three courses.



PFDP held individual interviews with each recommended finalist to confirm the selection. The panel was so impressed by the semi-finalists during the interviews that it chose seven to receive the Teaching Excellence Award this year. The panel noted the range of teaching methods used, the love of students and teaching that was demonstrated, as well as a deep passion and commitment to the profession. Coming from a variety of fields and backgrounds and possessing different styles and methods for excellence in teaching, the PFDP is pleased to honor the following excellent teachers for 2010.



Dr. Sami Al-Jaber is Professor of Theoretical Physics at An-Najah National University in Nablus. The interview committee was enthralled by examples he gave of how he breaks down complex physics into comprehensive and easy to digest information about the physical world around us. Dr. Al-Jaber is also concerned with the humanistic aspect of teaching—that above everything else a teacher is working with humans and that sciences should benefit mankind.

Dr. Ahmad Atawneh is Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics at Hebron University, where he began teaching in 1991. In his syllabi, Dr. Atawneh emphasizes two things: linguistics education as a means of acquiring critical thinking and analytical skills and writing research papers as a form of professional development for his students. His students noted his service to the community, his profound knowledge of his field, and that he is a conscientious person.

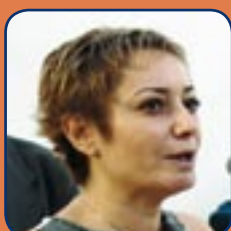


Teaching Excellence Awards



Dr. Akram Kharroubi is Head of the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences at Al-Quds University and Associate Professor of Biochemistry. Dr. Kharroubi's philosophy of teaching in the sciences depends on developing the critical thinking skills of his students that would enable them to deal with the complexity of biochemical problems. He believes that he can help his country by graduating minds that can think. This is how he measures his own success as an educator.

Ms. Samar Mousa is an Instructor of Physical Education and the Director of the Athletics Department at Bethlehem University where she has taught for 24 years. Her commitment to physical education and to empowering women and girls has also lead her to conduct various research projects including obstacles faced by Arab women in the sports field in Arab Countries and how to make coaches better critical thinkers. Her commitment to teaching is such that, when approached by her students to initiate the first Palestinian women's football team, Ms. Mousa not only obliged but also drove them to and from practice every day.



Dr. Nadia Nasser-Najjab is Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Cultural Studies at Birzeit University. In attempting to apply philosophical theories and concepts to the real world Dr. Najjab invites guest speakers to her classes and applies interactive lessons like role playing and games. She stresses that one of her main goals is to encourage her students to accept different perceptions of the same situation, thereby promoting tolerance of various opinions and outlooks. Dr. Najjab has just completed a short term PFDP fellowship with Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies.

Ms. Eeman Salem has been Lecturer of Geriatric Health at Al-Quds University for the past five years. As she teaches geriatric nursing, Ms. Salem often takes her students outside of the classroom and into the nursing centers to learn first-hand and brings in guest lecturers. Her 4th year nursing students describe her teaching methodology as "creative, artistic, and talented." She is a winner in the Junior category.



Dr. Bassem Shraydeh is Professor of Chemistry at An-Najah National University. In discussing his love for teaching he notes that he sees his students as very important people that he goes to meet for class sessions. Many of his colleagues in the science department at An-Najah University were his former students.

Look for our next call for applications for the Teaching Excellence Awards in the spring of 2011 on our website.

2010 Academic Colloquium

The Teaching Excellence Awards concluded the first day of this year's annual Academic Colloquium, which took place at the Leaders Hall in the Prico Building in Ramallah July 31- August 1, 2010.

Providing welcoming remarks to the colloquium were Her Excellency Ms. Lamis Al Alami, Minister of Education and Higher Education, Ms. Karen Excel, USAID's Education Development Office Director, Dr. Joseph Glicksberg, OSI's Program Manager, and AMIDEAST Country Director Steven Keller. The Key Note Speaker was, Dr. Aziza Ellozy, the founding and current director of the Center for Learning and Teaching at the American University of Cairo, Egypt. Dr. Aziza's background is in chemistry and materials engineering and she has wide experience teaching in the natural sciences in the US and has received numerous awards such as the "Best Teacher in America" Award from the Who's Who Among American Teachers (1998). Dr. Ellozy is extremely active in research aimed at faculty development and assessment, and the application of educational technology in curricula.



The theme of this year's colloquium was "Building Partnerships in Teaching Excellence".



Accordingly PFDP coordinated with its PhD Fellows to work with their US professors and fellow students to compile a series of joint presentations that would be the highlight of this colloquium. Four of the US professors were able to attend in person and present alongside their Palestinian colleagues. The presentations covered a wide range of topics carrying innovative titles such as "Integrating Serious Games in Higher Education Programs", "Bridging the Gap between Academics and Practitioners: Graduate Certificate Programs", and "Teacher Professional Development Programs in Palestine: Changing Beliefs and Practices."

The joint presentations offered an extraordinary opportunity for Palestinian and US professors to combine their educational experiences towards investigating a common topic. Furthermore, the colloquium provided US colleagues with an opportunity to visit Palestine and get a glimpse of the daily life of the Palestinians they are working with.

Tyler Davis and Ziad Zaghrout are PhD students at the University of Washington. They teamed up to present A Case Study of the Multi-Strategy Approach at the University of Washington. Tyler enjoyed visiting Zaghrout in his hometown, where Ziad hosted him in his home.



Tyler and Ziad during their joint presentation at the Academic Colloquium

PFDP PhD Graduates

We are pleased to acknowledge the graduation of recent PFDP PhD Fellows. All of their dissertations are available from PFDP upon request.



Ola Khalili graduated with a degree in Education from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is currently teaching Education for BA and MA students at Birzeit University.

Her dissertation focused on beliefs related to professional development of mathematics teachers.



Ayman Khalifah graduated in May 2010 with a degree in Education from the Department of Education Policy, Research, and Administration at University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

He is currently applying for a number of teaching and research positions at Palestinian universities and NGOs.



Mohammad Zayyad was the third PhD Fellow to graduate with a doctorate in Special Education from Boston College.



Mohammad Awad successfully completed all his PhD requirements and defended his dissertation on April 14. He graduated from the University of Texas – Dallas with a degree in Public Affairs/Non-Profit Management. His dissertation is titled, Volunteerism in Nonprofit Sector – A Case Study of Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the West Bank.



Wael Ramadan successfully completed his PhD requirements in December of 2009, and graduated with a degree in Public Administration from Cleveland State University.



Fida Yaseen Araj graduated this summer from the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign with a doctorate in Regional Planning. She is currently teaching Architecture at

An-Najah National University, but is awaiting the opening of the new Department of Urban Planning at the University in order to teach there.

New Programs

MA Scholarships in Education to US

PFDP's first cohort of nine MA Fellows will begin their MA programs in education at Syracuse University-School of Education, Boston College-Lynch School and Education, and the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania this fall. The nine fellows will enroll in an eleven-month education program and return to Palestine and resume their teaching and administrative careers with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. PFDP will be recruiting the second cohort of MA Fellows in September.



MA fellows with Her Excellency Ms. Lamis Al Alami during the Academic Colloquium

Centers for Teaching Excellence

The idea of supporting centers for teaching excellence in West Bank universities was discussed during the tour of West Bank universities conducted by PFDP staff in April and May and during a meeting of academic vice-presidents and the Minister of Education and Higher Education and USAID senior officials in late May. During the May meeting a call for expressions of interest was circulated to all universities. Eleven proposals were received from nine universities in response to the call. Of those, six were shortlisted and requested to submit a full proposal for funding by the end of September. Four of the six will be selected for funding. During the spring and summer, PFDP also put out a call for expressions of interest to 35 top U.S. universities to work with Palestinian universities. The call for expressions of interest was for US universities with existing centers

for teaching excellence to work with the four selected Palestinian universities over the next two years to create or upgrade an existing center and prepare suitable programs for faculty development and scholarship in teaching and learning. PFDP will host a workshop joining US and local universities on centers for teaching excellence in mid September.

In order to increase local understanding on the form and role of centers for teaching excellence, the Key Note speaker at this year's Academic Colloquium was Dr. Aziza Ellozy, Director of the Center for Learning and Teaching at the American University of Cairo. Her presentation focused on the challenges and success of preparing and supporting faculty in the changes of teaching and learning, as well as reflecting the experience of AUC in this regard.

Faculty Development

Each year, PFDP organizes a series of workshops, seminars or lectures with the aim of bringing faculty together to discuss and debate trends or issues in higher education. These events provide a forum for communication, faculty networking, and professional development, as well as spotlight visiting international scholars and/or local expertise. Faculty may apply to receive financial assistance to organize a workshop or seminar at any time throughout the year.

Faculty Development Series in Gaza Strip

As part of its yearlong support to university faculty to expand on their teaching horizons, PFDP conducted two faculty development series in Gaza. The first took place on May 12 and was titled “Gaza Graduates...where to?” The seminar discussed future work opportunities for Gaza graduates under the current uncertain political and economic situation. The seminar also described the best mechanisms to establish connection between what is offered in academic programs and what is needed by the labor market. The last part of the seminar discussed using employment intermediaries and how these intermediaries can play a major role in providing post graduation training that will qualify graduates for specific work opportunities. Eighty participants from different universities attended the workshop.



Participants during the first workshop titled “Gaza Graduates ... where to?”

The second workshop took the form of a seminar titled “E-Learning...Prospects and Challenges” which was held on June 17 in cooperation with Al Quds Open University. The workshop was an all-day seminar and was divided into three sessions. The first session introduced e-learning as a method and discussed the types of challenges faced by both faculty and students. The other two sessions specifically addressed the actual application of e-learning at QOU and ways to improve it. Over 70 faculty members attended this seminar.

Faculty Development Series in the West Bank

Three Faculty Development Series workshops were held this year in the West Bank.

The first was conducted in February of 2009 in conjunction with the return of recent PhD graduate Dr. Mohammad Zayyad to Palestine. He presented his dissertation titled: Mediated Cognitive Strategies on the Reading

Comprehension Performance and Self-efficacy of Palestinian-Arab Middle School Students with LD to an audience of people involved in Special Needs Education including Ministry of Education and Higher Education, school officials, and university faculty and students.

Held in May of 2010, the second workshop was organized by Dr. Itaf Arafat, Professor of Speech and Language Therapy at the Community College for Women in Ramallah, and consisted of a three day workshop with world renowned Scottish speech therapist Dr. Jan Anderson, who focused on various speech problems prevalent in children of different ages, as well as the means of dealing with these problems. Dr. Anderson also dedicated a large part of the workshop to stuttering and the different methods of dealing with stuttering children through therapy sessions.



Participants at workshop with Dr. Jan Anderson (below Picture) – Ramallah

The third workshop gave the opportunity for Abdalnaser Arafat and Dr. Ruth Steiner to take their joint Academic Colloquium presentation one step further and share it in an official workshop which was held on August 3 at Birzeit University. The goal of the workshop was to introduce methods for coordination of land use and transportation and how to select land for affordable housing. The workshop followed up on the main issues discussed in their paper titled "Teaching Decision-Making: Providing Hands-on Geographic Information System (GIS) Education to Support Urban Planning Research" which was presented during the Academic Colloquium.



If you know of visiting international professors or have ideas for a workshop or seminar that may aid your teaching and assist in improving instruction, please visit our website for more information on applying to our Faculty Development Series grants.



Dr. Ruth Steiner talking to participants during the workshop

Upcoming PFDP events:

- Centers for Teaching Excellence – PFDP is organizing a workshop in September in which a mission from two US universities will work with local Palestinian universities on developing their full proposals for establishing centers for teaching excellence.
- MA Scholarships in Education – The second call for application will be available in October
- Call for participants in English for Academics – Participants in English training for academics' courses will be available in September
- Call for Faculty Grants – The call for application for new faculty grants will begin in November
- Collaborative Projects in Teaching – The new call for establishing collaborative projects in teaching between different Palestinian universities will be available in November

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