

In May of 2003, Texas A&M University signed an agreement with the Qatar Foundation to bring an engineering school to Education City, Qatar's new vision of a multi-institutional and integrated university. Texas A&M University began classes in September of that same year, leaving four months to recruit students, staff, and faculty and establish a learning environment in which an engineering curriculum could be delivered. This paper will discuss the multiple hurdles that TAMU had to overcome in order to create Texas A&M University at Qatar, a branch campus of TAMU dedicated to delivering a 'western' engineering curriculum to students in and from the Middle East.

Texas A&M University at Qatar is a co-educational engineering school that currently offers four degrees: electrical, mechanical, chemical, and petroleum. A novel concept in Qatar is males and females attend classes together and work along side one another on projects. The chief architects of TAMUQ decided that they would not follow the model of other universities operating in the Middle East whereby they hired educational mercenaries with little or no ties to the main campus to teach their classes. Instead, the TAMUQ has faculty from the TAMU campus rotating to Qatar for one- or two-year assignments to ensure that the curriculum delivered to the students in Qatar is exactly the same as it is in Texas. Thus, the degree and diploma that students earn at TAMUQ will look exactly like those earned by their Texas counterparts.

Through the hard work of people in Texas and in Qatar, TAMUQ was able to meet its deadline and began class on September 7, 2003 with 28 students (15 females and 13 males). The first semester of courses were designed to achieve two goals: (1) assess the academic ability of mostly Arabic-speaking students whose classes would be taught exclusively in English (the international language of engineering); and (2) prepare students who have received most of their schooling in math and the sciences to succeed in all parts of the engineering curriculum which includes a strong liberal arts component. The first semester's courses included mathematics classes, a computer science class, an introductory engineering class, and liberal arts classes.

Half-way through the first semester it became evident that at least half of the students at TAMUQ were indeed capable of taking a full engineering load, so the math courses were revamped in order to increase instruction. After the first semester, two different tracks were created, one for the students who were clearly mastering the current material and another track for those students who still required additional developmental training.

This paper will discuss the variety of issues faced while trying to create a university from scratch in a Middle Eastern country. This paper will also discuss student performance at TAMUQ in terms of where the students were before classes began and where they stand now, at the end of their first year of studies. Finally, this paper will present lessons that we have learned from our first year.