

# Carolinas Committee on U.S.-Arab Relations

## NEWSLINES

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*Qatar Delegation is Overall Outstanding Delegation at Southeast Regional Model.*

## **Southeast Regional Model is a Success**

With over 230 participants, the Southeast Model, held March 12-14, was another success. Events began Friday evening with the keynote speech by Chelsea Jaccard. Chelsea, an award-winning three-year member of the Converse delegation joined the Peace Corps following her graduation in 2003. Employing her undergraduate majors in politics and studio art and her privately-gained skills in sign language, Chelsea taught art to deaf students at a school in northern Ghana. After her return from Ghana, she obtained a masters degree from American University in International Peace and Conflict

Resolution with an emphasis on the Middle East. She continued her study of Arabic that she began as an undergraduate in a summer program study in Morocco and then in independent study at Converse. During her graduate years, Chelsea did an internship in Kurdistan, and upon graduation she worked in the country for a private company as a consultant on Kurdish regional government. Chelsea has just been appointed a foreign service officer working with USAID.

Chelsea gave an inspirational speech on the value of Model Arab League and how important that it had been in her

*(continued on page 2)*



## NEWS AND ARTICLES



*Large Caucus in Palestinian Council*

development and young career. She emphasized how the skills gained and honed in debate, diplomacy, negotiation, writing, and leadership were important as she worked in the delicate environment of Kurdistan amidst the forging the new Iraqi nation.

Prior to announcing the convening the 24th Southeast Model Guest, Secretary-General Grace Bagwell, Converse 2007 alum, reiterated the themes that Chelsea introduced. Grace, one of the greatest debaters in the history of the Converse program, talked about her experiences in her career as well. Grace received her masters in public administration in 2009 at the University of Georgia, where she won numerous honors. She continued into the doctorate program on a full scholarship, and she also heads her own Athens-based organization that works in poverty reduction.

The councils met for the first time in the newly-renovated facilities of Kuhn Hall, which provided spacious rooms and advanced technology in each venue. Besides the usual councils, the special council on refugees and internally displaced persons provided a lively venue. Saturday evening the participants enjoyed a delicious Arab banquet in the Converse dining hall.

A human interest story at the Model was the fact that a father and son participated on the same council for different universities. Stuart Campbell participated in the 2007 Southeast Model as an undergraduate student at Jacksonville State University and considered it a most valuable opportunity. He recommended the experience to his son Donald Campbell, a junior history and political science major at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Stuart is now a graduate student in history at Jacksonville State,



*Chairs on 1st Row at Summit*



*Nice Facilities for SouthEast Model Social Council*

## NEWS AND ARTICLES

and the two decided to participate together for their respective schools. They arranged to be assigned to the political council.

Donald was nervous and unsure of himself on Friday evening, but by Saturday he gained his footing and started to get into the events. His father also reported that he too felt that "I had bombed on Friday evening," but he also gained his confidence and became a participating member of the council on Saturday. Stuart said that it was a great experience watching his son grow in confidence and participation on the council. Both father and son considered the experience a wonderful opportunity and they had a great weekend together.

Following the summit session Sunday afternoon, the awards ceremony recognized the achievements of the weekend. Outstanding delegation



*Stuart and Donald Campbell at Southeast Model*

awards went to Converse College (Qatar), Northeastern University (Saudi Arabia), and University of North Carolina—Charlotte (UAE). Georgia State University (Morocco) and Kennesaw State University (Sudan) received honorably mention citations. Daniel Rothschild (Northeastern University) received the outstanding



*Secretary-General Grace Bagwell (in green) observes Special Council on Refugees*

chair award for leadership of the social affairs council and Ridgley Beckett (Converse College) was honorable mention as head of the political affairs council.

The 25th Southeast Regional Model will meet, March 11-13, 2011, at Converse College.



*Composing a Resolution in the Environmental Council*





*Converse Delegation at Qatar Embassy*

## Southeast Model Schools Dominate at National Model

For the second year in a row, schools from the Southeast Regional University Model dominated the National Model Arab League, held March 26-28, at Georgetown University Hotel. Five of the six-award winning delegations participated two weeks earlier at the Southeast Model. Northeastern University (Saudi Arabia), Georgia State University (Morocco), Converse College (Qatar), Kennesaw State University (Sudan), and University of North Carolina—Charlotte (Tunisia)

took top honors. The American University of Cairo (Egypt) was the only institution to win a delegation award that had not been at the Southeast Regional Model. Ridgley Beckett (Converse) and Matthew Richmond (Kennesaw State) shared the award as the outstanding chair and Anna Owens (Converse) was named as honorable mention.

Ms. Merissa Khurma, press attaché, Embassy of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, served as the keynote

speaker. Her interesting presentation spurred a lively and lengthy question and answer period that touched on a wide range of issues in the region. At the closing ceremony HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Talal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, son of HRH Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz, international humanitarian, philanthropist, and exponent of progressive politics, spoke briefly addressing his admiration for U.S. democratic politics. The popular prince, who is chairman of both the Arab Open University Forum



*Justice Ridenour Responds to Question in ACJ*

and the Transpacific Broadcasting Group, was a hit with the delegates and most delegations wished to have their picture taken with him. Dr. John Duke Anthony concluded the assembly with remarks about the value of model simulations.



*Caucusing in Palestinian Council*

As it does every year, this year's Model had several innovations. The most important one was the introduction of a second Arab Court of Justice with two different slates of cases. This allowed all schools that wished to participate on the Court to have the opportunity.

When the Secretariat for the 2011 National Model was announced, it was clear that the Southeast Regional Model remains a dominant force as five of the seven council chairs and one of the two Presiding Judges of the Arab Court of Justice will be from schools in the Southeast Model.



*John Duke Anthony Speaks at National Model Summit*





Megan Madison

## Converse Student Reflects on Year as a Fulbright in Jordan

“At times the experience has been challenging and at other times it is rewarding or exciting,” says Megan Madison, Converse College 2009 graduate, speaking about her year as a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Amman, Jordan. When Jordan joined the Fulbright program last year, Megan was one of only two students selected for placement in the country. Assigned to The Jubilee School, a private school for gifted, underprivileged students, established in 1993 by Queen Noor, Megan is the primary teacher for courses in communication and leadership skills. She developed the curriculum for both programs and teaches them at the ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade levels; she also mentors students who need academic assistance in other areas.

Beyond her daily job, Megan studies Arabic at the Qasid Language Center in Amman, where she has progressed to level three out of five levels, and she volunteers for other activities such as serving as a judge for a forensics competition at the American School of Amman. If this were not enough, she continues her music studies with the director of the Amman Symphony Orchestra at the National Music Conservatory of Jordan.

Megan’s preparation for this opportunity began before she entered Converse. Although she planned to be a performance music major, she sought a school where she could study Arabic as well. Converse did not offer the language at the time, but in a phone call to Dr. Joe P. Dunn, chair of the history and politics department, she learned that some of his students were pursuing Arabic during summer study in the Middle East. Megan entered the Converse Petrie School of Music as a double performance major in flute and piano and later added a major in politics in the School of Arts and Sciences.

During Megan’s traumatic freshman year, both her father and her older sis-

ter died from cancer. Megan suffered periodic bouts of melancholy that had academic consequences, but she devoted herself to cancer awareness. During her undergraduate years, she became a leader in the annual cancer fundraising effort with the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. To pay tuition bills, she entered scholarship pageants in which her talent, poise, and interview skills earned her multiple awards; cancer awareness was her platform.

She also threw herself into the Model Arab League program. For the tryouts for the delegation during her freshman year, she secluded herself from music practice and everything else for a week of crash preparation. The tryout debate topic dealt with the perspectives of the various factions in Iraq. Megan remembers that “I have never worked more intensely or with more focus than that week of preparation. They wanted us to tackle issues involving Shias, Sunnis, and Kurds... people that I knew nothing about, but I committed myself to learning everything that I could.” Her efforts were successful as she earned a spot on the delegation and began a four-year career that included numerous debate and best chair awards and culminated with her role as co-head delegate of the Converse delegation in her senior year.

She also starred in Model UN and Model NATO. In the latter program, she served as assistant secretary general in her junior year and secretary general during her senior year. Dr. Dunn, the model programs advisor, stated, “I have never witnessed an instance of more impressive leadership than Megan’s handling of the Model NATO Summit, and frankly I doubt that I ever will. Her command of all issues, her style, and her efficiency permeated the room and every individual present was in awe.” He continued that Megan demonstrated a unique level of poise and leadership in everything that she did whether as head delegate, cancer fundraiser, pag-

eant participant, community speaker, or as the Converse College student body president. “Megan encountered some tough experiences in life and it made her strong,” he reflected. “As a musician, a pageant contestant, or a model programs delegate, she was a performer who excelled under pressure.”

Nowhere was her talent better demonstrated than in her interview for the Fulbright award. The committee reported that on paper her academic credentials did not seem to measure up to other candidates. But that was before they met her in person. A member exclaimed that Megan mesmerized the room. She demonstrated command presence and total poise when questioned in both English and in Arabic.

During her Converse years, Megan followed her plan to study Arabic during summers in the region. After her sophomore year, she studied in Morocco; and in the summer after her junior year she participated in an Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation program in Galilee, where she organized a trip to work with a construction effort under the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolition (ICAHD) on the West Bank. At Converse, Megan kept her Arabic skills alive through an independent study and by driving to Columbia, South Carolina on weekends for private lessons.

The Fulbright year in Jordan is a step in Megan’s plan to attend graduate school in conflict resolution and to work in the field in the Middle East. She explains that the experience of living in the society and integrating into the Jordanian teaching environment allows for a level of understanding well beyond that possible from lectures and reading. She reflects that she believes that “I not only understand certain cultural mindsets, but I know how to work within them as well.” She concludes, “I am forever grateful for the opportunities that both my undergraduate education and the Fulbright program have afforded me.”



## Profiles of Model League Faculty Advisors



Eimad Houry

*This is the second installment in a series on faculty advisors for programs that participate in the Southeast Regional Model. Faculty advisors make the opportunities possible for their students to gain from the model experience, and they deserve recognition for their contributions.*

### Eimad Houry Mercer University

When I first arrived in the United States in 1980, I had no idea that my future and career would unfold in this country. I was born in Kuwait but grew up partially in Lebanon and Dubai. I left Dubai in 1978 to attend a boarding school in England where I completed high school and then applied to attend American universities. I eventually earned my Ph.D. in 1991 in international relations from Florida State University and joined the faculty of Mercer University where I am now chair of the department of political science and director of the College of Liberal Arts international affairs program.

I first learned about Model Arab League in 1992 and led a Mercer delegation to the conference in

Savannah that year. We represented Jordan and we received an honorable mention award in our first year. From that positive experience we decided to organize a Model United Nations for high school students to be held Mercer. We conducted this model for five years until other responsibilities made it difficult for me to continue.

After I introduced the international affairs major in 2001, students in the program started to express a strong interest in model conferences. We participated in the Southern Regional Model United Nations for a couple of years and from Model UN faculty advisors I learned about the Southeast Model Arab League held at Converse College. We participated in that event for three years before we accepted an invitation to participate in the National Model Arab League. We now participate in both the Southeast and National Models.

Model Arab League has been an extremely valuable experience for our students. The Middle East is one of the most mysterious places to the American public and members of the delegation learn a great deal about the region's people, cultures, religions, politics, and economic challenges. Model Arab League is unique in its ability to provide students the opportunity to learn about these dimensions. I consider the program a powerful conduit for cross-cultural understanding and respect. Our delegates are recruits from across the college with a wide range of academic backgrounds, from the predictable political science majors, to the occasional

biology and chemistry majors who have also taken a strong interest in the program.

Two Mercer students who participated in both the regional and National models are now employed by federal agencies and work on the Middle East region. Several other students have pursued the study of Arabic and have studied in Morocco and Egypt to improve their language abilities. My students and I are very grateful for the opportunities presented through the Model Arab League programs at Converse and at the National Model.

### Beth Traxler Greenville Technical College

My interest in other countries and cultures developed at an early age. The stories and slides of my aunt, a missionary in Sierra Leone, exposed me to a world that was a far cry from my home in Spartanburg, South Carolina. At the same time I had the good fortune to grow up in Spartanburg where the city schools had the wisdom to begin instruction of French in primary school. And almost all of the teachers were French natives. This early exposure to other cultures led me to time spent in Europe studying and researching and ultimately to a Ph.D. in international studies. With primary interests in France and sub-Saharan Africa, how did I end up the advisor to Greenville Tech's Model Arab League?

Truth be told, my initial involvement in Model Arab League was driven almost entirely by budgetary constraints. Soon after arriving



Beth Traxler with Two Award-Winning Students at the Southeast Model

at Greenville Tech, I began taking students to a Model UN simulation in Atlanta during the fall semesters. I always had students who "caught the bug" and wanted to attend a model simulation in the spring. However, we did not have the funds to participate in one of the national Model UNs in the spring term. At that time the Southeast Model Arab League was in Savannah, Georgia, which was "doable." And thus Greenville Tech's involvement in MAL began. We attended the model in Savannah for several years and then had a short period without involvement when I was in administrative positions. When we rejoined, the Southeast Model had moved to Converse College.

Over the years my own interest in the Middle East has grown, and so has that of the college as the Middle East became the focus of our international education program. For several years under various Fulbright programs, we hosted students and faculty from the

they push to finish their programs as quickly as possible. But there are students who want and thrive on the model-type experience. One example is a young man named Allen who participated in the model several years ago. Despite having no upper-level courses in the field, Allen won numerous awards for his participation on the Arab Court of Justice. The experience boosted his confidence and skill levels that served him well when he continued his undergraduate education at Columbia University. One of the benefits of the Southeast Model for community colleges is the size and collegiality promoted by our Converse hosts and other participating colleges.

region. Today we are in the first year of a US Department of Education Title 6A grant to develop a program in Middle Eastern Studies. In addition to offering Arabic, we will develop courses, one of which will examine politics of the region. One professor will be leading a short-term study abroad program to Turkey in May and another is working on a similar program to Egypt for the following year. Participation in the Model Arab League will also be a component of the program.

The realities of community colleges make it a struggle to identify students to participate in these model programs. Not surprisingly, some years we have a full complement; others only a partial delegation. Our students are with us such a short time; most work many hours outside of school; some have family obligations. Often the best students are quite focused on taking only courses that they need for their major and

With the development of a Middle Eastern Studies program I anticipate the strengthening of Greenville Tech's delegations to the Southeast Model Arab League. Those of us involved in model simulations have seen first-hand the benefits ranging from improved skills to attitudinal changes that occur with our students. The Southeast Arab League Model stands out for its exceptional quality. Its size and collegiality promoted by our Converse host and the other participating colleges is particularly appreciated. The organization of the model and the dedication of the students and faculty, particularly Professor Joe Dunn of Converse, have remained constant through the years. I appreciate Professor Dunn's support for community college involvement and I look forward to Greenville Tech's continued participation as our college embarks on a major push to bring the Middle East to our students.



## Two Converse Students Attend 18th Annual Arab-U.S. Policymakers Conference

Zareen Khan and Liz Andrews from the Converse Model League delegation attended the 18th Annual Arab-Policymakers Conference, held October 18-19, at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC. Zareen, a third-year senior from Islamabad, Pakistan, and Liz, a junior from Greenville, South Carolina, are three-year members of the Converse Model Arab League delegation. Zareen is the 2010 recipient of the Converse Outstanding Model Programs Award, and Liz served as the Assistant Secretary General at the National Model.

Key speakers at the Conference included Admiral William J. Fallon, former Commander of the U.S. Central Command (2007-2008), Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command (2005-2007), and the 31st Vice Chief of Naval Operations (2000-2003); H.E. Abdel A. Al-Jubeir, the Ambassador to the United States of

the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; H.E. Samir Sumaidia'ie, Ambassador to the United States of the Republic of Iraq; H.E. Dr. Imad Moustapha, Ambassador, Ambassador to the United States of the Syrian Arab Republic; H.E. Hounda Ezra Ebrahim Nonoo, the first female Ambassador to the United States from the Kingdom of Bahrain; and the Honorable Charles W. Freeman, former U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Zareen and Liz met several of the speakers, attended a reception at the Embassy of Saudi Arabia, and interacted with other dignitaries at the conference. Zareen commented:

"The best portions of the conference were the panel discussions, which were effective in displaying variation in opinions and yet convergence in solutions. Of all speakers, Mr. Hisham Melham, the Washington bureau chief of Al-Arabiya, was my

favorite. His comments were both profound and yet well rooted in the reality of the complex dynamics of US-Arab relations. The conference helped me to better understand the interdependence of the United States with the Arab world, a relationship that must be built upon cooperation toward common goals rather than a unilateral narrow perspective of American power.

Liz was particularly impressed with Dr. Mody al-Kalaf, Director of Cultural and Social Affairs, at the Saudi Cultural and Educational Mission at the Saudi Embassy in Washington, DC., who spoke eloquently about the advancement of women in the Kingdom.

Converse students have attended the U.S.-Arab Policymakers Conference for several years, and all have found it to be a most valuable educational experience.

## The Carolinas Model UN Adds League of Arab States Committee

**The 19th Annual Carolinas Model UN** hosted by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, **October 23-24, 2009**, included a League of Arab States committee.

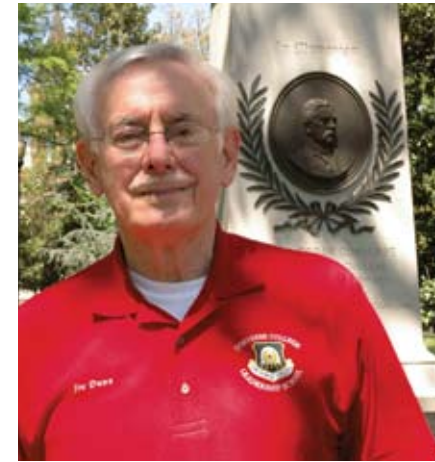
- The two agenda items for the committee were
- (1) Overcoming the barriers of resistance to the 2007 Arab Peace Initiative, and
  - (2) Increasing transparency of Arab economic and financial institutions.

Converse College delegates **Ridgley Becket (Qatar)** and **Liz Andrews (Iraq)** took the only two awards given in the committee. Ms. Beckett was named the outstanding delegate, and Ms. Andrews was named distinguished delegate.

The Converse Iraq team was an award-winning delegation at the Model.

## Omid Safi, *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters*

(HarperOne, 2009)



### Book Review

**Dr. Joe P. Dunn**  
**Charles A. Dana Professor of History and Politics, Converse College**

I stumbled on this book while looking for another one on the library shelf, and it proved to be a fortuitous discovery. My remarks and assessments speak to the book as a teaching source. I try to introduce students in my Islamic politics course to as many different expressions of Islam and resultant political manifestations as possible. The different national and ethnic dimensions of Islam, including Arab, Persian, Turkish, South Asian, and East Asian, pose a formidable challenge, especially since each has its unique traditional, fundamentalist, and reform or modernist elements. It is unfortunate that many Westerners maintain rather limited views and simplistic portraits of Muslims. It is as if Christianity was defined totally in terms of Pat Robertson or others of such orientation. Obviously Christianity is a mosaic of innumerable interpretations and expressions. And Islam is as well. Just as many Christians prefer to

define their faith only in terms of their limited perspective and treat those outside their interpretations as mistaken or even apostates, Muslims do the same.

Omid Safi clearly identifies with a particular tradition. He is an Iranian-American Shia Sufi. Born in the United States, he grew up in Iran but fled the Khomeini regime in the mid 1980s. Today he is professor of Islamic studies at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, chair for the Study of Islam at the American Academy of Religion, and a member of the advisory board of the Pluralism Project at Harvard University. An earlier edited work, entitled *Progressive Islam: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism*, is indicative of his theology and politics. Safi has an ability to speak to a non-Muslim audience and to draw comparative examples from Judaism and Christianity that make Islam more understandable and attractive. However, unlike some others who attempt this, he does not resort to simplistic deconstructions that distort the faiths. His approach is scholarly and sensitive, and he is, to quote from the book jacket, "in the forefront of the debate to engage the spiritual legacy of Islam with a progressive commitment to social justice and pluralism."

As a source for students, *Memories*

*of Muhammad* offers an argument for the importance of the man as historical and spiritual figure no matter what one's religious tradition. Safi calls for a common humanity against the alternative of sectarian strife or a "clash of civilizations." He articulates his personal image of Muhammad as the Prophet of Mercy, a fully human man who demonstrated the possibilities for mercy and social justice for all human beings. For Safi, Muhammad represented the ideal as father, husband, friend, leader, and prophet. This challenges the Wahhabi and other similar exclusivist traditions that fear that any reverence for the life of the Prophet takes away from total allegiance to God.

The book moves back and forth between an historical account of Muhammad's life and how memories of him shape the way that Muslims live their individual and collective lives. The treatment of the Arabian world before Muhammad and the Prophet's struggles with the society into which he brought his message is insightful for both novice and more sophisticated students. Safi makes his case that the very root of the word Islam translated as submission to Allah also is root for well-being and wholeness of the heart. Thus a Muslim must

(continued on page 12)

## LEARNING RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

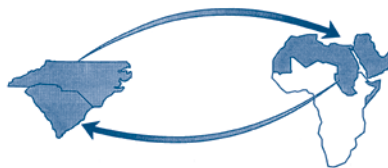
submit to God by giving his whole and pure heart in service to humanity. Before society can be changed, the individual heart must be transformed. Chapter 2 on the “Muhammadi Revolution” flushes out the model of the transformative servant life that Muhammad displayed in the various stages of his life. Safi focuses on the Prophet as model for family relations, friendship, and societal and political leadership. The Sufi overtones of this interpretation differs from many other biographies of Muhammad. Safi also reinterprets Quranic condemnations of Jews and other non-Muslims to put them in their historical context rather than as universal prescriptions.

The final part of the book is overtly

Shia with a history of the first caliphs, the Suni-Shia split, and a reverence for Ali and the Family of the Prophet, and the Sufi overtones remain obvious. This coverage is most enlightening for those who, such as the reviewer, have tended to emphasize Sunni perspectives in my classroom. Safi’s treatment of the legacy of hadith scholarship is particularly interesting. He takes some serious shots at the Wahabbi’s extreme efforts against any veneration of Muhammad as he explains how these austere puritans in the early nineteenth century destroyed many sites and monuments associated with the Prophet. These included gravestones of many of the Prophet’s family and companions, as well as homes associated with the birthplaces of

Muhammad, his wife Khadijah, and Ali. Safi reports that the Wahabbis even contemplated and in fact began to destroy the Prophet’s Mosque in Medina.

It is important for students and novice readers to understand that this book reflects a particular manifestation of Islam. Sunni pluralists would present a very different picture of the faith, and all the ranges from traditionalist to fundamentalist, whether Sunni or Shia, would define their beliefs in different terms. But Safi provides a good articulation of one serious strain of moderate, progressive Islam, and thus serves a most valuable function. With the caveats implicit above, the book is highly recommended.



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