

## News Release

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### Saudi Arabian students enroll at IU Kokomo

**KOKOMO, Ind.** — Talal Al Hammad expected Kokomo, Indiana, would be a lot like New York City, because of what he had seen in movies.

He left his home in Saudi Arabia to earn a Master of Business Administration (M.B.A.) at Indiana University Kokomo, and has been pleasantly surprised by life on a small campus. He especially enjoys the relationships between students and faculty, who are on a first-name basis, and have provided support every step of the way.

“The faculty are really friendly and helpful, and so are my classmates,” he said. “I feel like I’ve become part of the community. I’m really happy to be here.”

Al Hammad is one of 15 Saudi students enrolled in the program. He wants to learn more about American culture while earning his master’s degree, and also hopes to teach his classmates more about his country.

“Many Americans think of the Middle East believe we still have camels and tents,” he said. “I hope we are building a bridge between us now, and we can make stereotypes vanish, hopefully forever.”

Gloria Preece, M.B.A. program director, is excited to have so many international students, and for the chance for the American students to learn from them as well.

“Diversity plays an important role in education,” she said. “Having students here from other parts of the world brings many new perspectives into the classroom and campus. I’ve really enjoyed meeting all of our new students from overseas. We look forward to helping them achieve their dreams of succeeding in a global business economy.”

Al Hammad found the M.B.A. program while searching online. He contacted Preece through Facebook for more information, and said she had replied with answers to

all his questions within an hour. She then worked with the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to gain approval of IU Kokomo's program as one Saudi student may attend on its scholarships.

"It would not be possible for us to be here without Gloria's help," he said. "We are all very thankful to her."

He was the first to enroll, starting classes in August 2012. After he was accepted, he immediately posted information about IU Kokomo on a Facebook page for Saudi students considering business schools in the United States.

"I had more than 100 replies asking me about it, which is how all the other 14 Saudi students knew about it," he said. They are all enrolled full-time, and will be on campus about two years to complete the M.B.A. program.

Mohammed Basurah looks forward to being involved with student activities, and was pleased by the variety offered on campus.

"I've been to two universities and didn't get the opportunity to be in activities," he said. "There are lots of interesting student activities here, which I have found to be an advantage. The students have been really friendly, too. We feel welcome here."

Al Hammad lives with his family in Indianapolis, where his wife is studying. Several of the other new students also commute from Indianapolis, but most have found apartments in Kokomo.

They're learning how to live like Americans, including eating the food. Saudi Arabia has many American chain restaurants, but the food doesn't taste exactly the same, Al Hammad said. Like most college students, their favorites are pizza and burgers. They've also learned that Americans prefer using debit cards, rather than carrying cash, and that many businesses, including gas stations, offer automated payment options.

Mohammed Alhargan came with some previous knowledge of the campus because his uncle graduated from the same program several years ago.

Abdul Aloqail is impressed with the business faculty, and the strength of the graduate business degree. Both of his parents studied in the United States, and told him not to be afraid to ask for help because Americans would treat him with kindness.

Basurah said they all have scholarships from their government, which sends its best and brightest students to earn advanced degrees, so they can come back and be their country's business leaders. Students may first spend 18 months at language schools, to improve their conversational English.

“We can gain the knowledge and experience to implement the best business practices when we go back, and use our knowledge to help the country,” he said.

Al Hammad anticipates more Saudi students will come to IU Kokomo for graduate and undergraduate programs, now that an initial group has enrolled.

The scholarship program has been in place since 2006, and there are approximately 70,000 Saudi students and their families in the United States.

*Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.*

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