



UCF



Report on the UCF-AUC Exchange Program

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Exchange Program
Fall 2024

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In May 2018, the University of Central Florida established a reciprocal exchange program with the American University in Cairo. This partnership with AUC offers students from both institutions the unique opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of each other's cultures. By exploring their differences, they discover commonalities that bring people closer together.

The UCF students participating in the exchange program at AUC are supported by their benefactors, Jonathan and Nancy Wolf. The Wolfs' generosity in sponsoring UCF students to study at AUC has been instrumental in creating scholarships that help offset the costs of housing, board, and incidental expenses. As UCF donors, the Wolfs have enabled UCF students in Business, Political Science, Engineering, and other disciplines to broaden their academic perspectives through this program.



UCF-AUC

NON-STUDENT EXCHANGE

As part of the Wolf family donation, **Global Perspectives and International Initiatives (GPII)** has taken the lead in implementing a faculty exchange program with AUC which has seen numerous visits between Orlando and Cairo over the past 6 years. GPII has also worked with AUC to organize and cohost several events in Orlando, Cairo, and Washington. GPII Executive Director has led five faculty delegation visits personally, and has participated as a speaker at several AUC-UCF events – including on American foreign policy, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas, U.S.-Arab relations, and the implications of U.S. politics regional and global order. GPII also has helped publish numerous articles in AUC’s prestigious *Cairo Review of Global Affairs*, including providing the bulk of content for a special climate change issue that coincided with Egypt hosting the UN Climate Summit in Sharm El Sheikh in November 2022. Dumke also taught political science at AUC as a Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Fall 2023 Semester, and currently is working with AUC’s School of Global Affairs and Public Policy to establish a Conflict Transformation Program.



AUC-UCF Faculty Exchange



RECIPROCOL STUDENT EXCHANGE

PROGRAM NUMBERS

BREAKDOWN BY TERM	UCF STUDENTS TO AUC	AUC STUDENTS TO UCF	TOTALS
FALL 2019	2	1	3
SPRING 2020	2	1	3
FALL 2021	2	4	6
SPRING 2022	1	3	4
FALL 2022	0	2	2
SPRING 2023	0	4	4
FALL 2023	5	4	9
SPRING 2024	4	0	4
TOTALS	16	19	35



Millican Hall, UCF



UCF STUDENTS WHO HAVE ATTENDED AUC

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	TERM	FIELD OF STUDY
Mark	Elmalakh	Fall 2019	Engineering
Mohab	Kellini	Fall 2019	Engineering
Quentin	West	Spring 2020	Political Science
Taniya	Shaffer	Spring 2020	Engineering
Jessica	Jones	Fall 2021	Business
Nour	Nour	Fall 2021	Business
Hannah	Barnes	Spring 2022	Political Science
Jana	Ibrahim	Fall 2023	Business
Royce	Reeves	Fall 2023	Business
Nicole	Roumi	Fall 2023	Business
Danielle	Samuels	Fall 2023	Engineering
Amr	Abualy	Fall 2023	Political Science
Cecilia	Deskins	Spring 2024	Business
Jade	Mohamad Ali	Spring 2024	Business
Petar	Isailovic	Spring 2024	Business
Tyler	Fioramonti	Spring 2024	Business



GPII's visit with President Cartwright and the Wolf family

UCF STUDENTS WHO HAVE ATTENDED AUC

FIRST NAME	LAST NAME	TERM	FIELD OF STUDY
Norhan	Abdeldayem	Fall 2019	Actuarial Science
Amro	Albegirmy	Spring 2020	Construction Engineering
Ahmed	Abdou	Fall 2021	Engineering
Menna	Elzahar	Fall 2021	Engineering
Nada	Habib	Fall 2021	Engineering
Passant	Faheem	Fall 2021	Theatre
Istanbul	Ba Abbad	Spring 2022	Health and Public Administration (Grad)
Mohammed	Al-Jebzi	Spring 2022	Engineering
Salma	Mohamed	Spring 2022	Business
Ahmed	Abdel Aleem	Fall 2022	Engineering
Fatma	Abousree	Fall 2022	Political Science
Mahmoud	Elshablany	Spring 2023	Engineering
Abdallah	Elshenawy	Spring 2023	Engineering
Mina	Ibrahim	Spring 2023	Business
Mohamad	Sayaf Sakin	Spring 2023	Engineering
Shady	Sawires	Fall 2023	Mechanical Engineering
Loka	Samir	Fall 2023	Mechanical Engineering
Youssef	Wissa	Fall 2023	Economics
Dina	Morsi	Fall 2023	Integrated Marketing Communication



THE IMPACT

EXCHANGE STORIES

Below are some stories of how the exchange program between University of Central Florida and the American University of Cairo have impacted students.

JANA IBRAHIM:

- Business Management Major
- Fall 2023 Exchange Program to AUC



Jana has traveled outside of the U.S. several times, primarily to Europe. She chose the American Cairo program because she met another AUC exchange student, Fatma Abousree (Fall 2022), in one of her classes at UCF in Fall 2022. Fatma had mentioned that there were many international students at AUC and that the campus was very welcoming. Jana formed a friendship with Fatma and other AUC students who came in subsequent semesters. She has continued her friendship with Fatma through the use of technology.

What surprised you the most about AUC and Egypt?

Jana received a scholarship to attend AUC. Being fluent in both Egyptian Arabic and English, she found it easy to connect with AUC students and other international students she met at orientation. She described the campus as beautiful, quiet, and walkable, and she admired its architecture. As part of her experience, she walked around the campus so frequently that one of the RAs suggested she organize a walking event.

Although Jana had visited Egypt before due to her Egyptian heritage, she wanted this experience as a student to see Egypt from a new perspective. She was eager to live on campus and experience camaraderie with other students. She loved the cultural experience of being in Cairo. While the campus was very quiet, stepping outside into the bustling activity of the city was an adrenaline rush. It felt as though Cairo never slept, with its vibrant nightlife.

What was your most enjoyable experience?

The most enjoyable experience for Jana was making new friendships. The experience differed greatly from her quieter life in America. Cairo's active environment offered many opportunities to engage with the country and its people through food, language, and music. Jana also had meaningful moments connecting with her parents and their Egyptian heritage. Visiting Egypt provided her the opportunity to strengthen those connections. Her UCF cohort's experience at AUC was also very positive.

How did you find the teaching style at AUC?

Jana found that classes at AUC were predominantly based on group projects, emphasizing collaboration with a diverse range of people. In contrast, her courses at UCF focused more on quizzes and exams. At AUC, she felt compelled to engage with others more actively. Her instructor, Dr. Jasmin Fouad, Associate Professor of Economics and Finance, made her classes enjoyable and memorable. The faculty was engaging and encouraging, leaving a lasting impression on Jana. She plans to work in Human Resources in the future, and this study abroad experience provided her with valuable exposure to students from various backgrounds.





PETAR ISAILOVIC:

- Marketing Major
- Spring 2023 Exchange Program to AUC

Can you tell us a bit about yourself and what led you to apply for a scholarship to study abroad in Egypt?

I am a student in marketing and have always been fascinated by international relations and business. I've had international experience in countries in Europe and Asia, but I wanted to explore a new culture that I had not previously had much exposure to. With Egypt being such an important nation not only today, but throughout history, I knew that completing an exchange semester in such a location would be transformative.

In what ways do you feel you have grown personally and professionally during your time at AUC and in Egypt?

I feel that I have grown personally and professionally in a variety of ways during my time at AUC. Professionally, I was able to learn an extensive amount through my classes thanks to my professors and classmates. The opportunity to view worldly themes and affairs through an Egyptian lens was incredibly unique. In a personal sense, I was able to grow by interacting with hundreds of people from around the world and further expanding my knowledge and understanding.

What role did connecting with AUC students or local communities play in your overall experience?

Connecting with AUC students and local communities played an immense role in my overall experience. Being able to meet so many amazing people from Egypt and the surrounding countries such as Yemen, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia made the experience unimaginably better. The friendships made and happy moments shared were incredible. Gaining insight about Cairo and Egypt from the local students was invaluable.

Can you identify any specific moments or experiences in Egypt that catalyzed a significant change in your outlook on life?

If anything, my experience in Egypt only further supported my current outlooks on life. I am a firm believer in people-to-people initiatives and cultural exchanges and think that we all only benefit from interacting with and learning from others, whether it be a neighbor or someone from the other side of the planet. Oftentimes I found myself in settings with students from all over the world- countries like Albania, Yemen, Germany, Turkey, Nigeria, Denmark, USA, and of course, Egypt. These experiences with such diverse groups only increased my belief in worldwide connection.

How has studying in Egypt and AUC influenced your understanding of global issues or cultural dynamics?

Studying in Egypt and at AUC gave me an entirely new first-person perspective and allowed me to interact with people holding many different viewpoints. I was able to develop a more in-depth understanding of worldwide cultural dynamics and a deeper understanding of global issues.

In your opinion, how did The Nancy and Jonathan Wolf Global Academic Initiative award that you received impact your ability to study abroad?

The Nancy and Jonathan Wolf Global Academic Initiative award that I received impacted my ability to study abroad by allowing me an extended amount of financial freedom throughout my semester. This gave me the opportunity to immerse myself in the experience without worrying about financial stressors.

How would you summarize your experience studying abroad in Egypt in just a few sentences?

Many people experience life in an unfamiliar setting and come back saying how glad they were to experience and learn about something different. Differences are what makes us unique and what makes the world so fascinating, and the differences tend to capture our attention. Regardless, I feel that new settings teach us that as people, we tend to be more similar than we are different. Egypt was yet another beautiful reminder that true human connection always transcends borders.

What advice would you give to prospective student who are interested in this opportunity?

Just do it! Studying in Egypt is certainly financially feasible, and though it might be daunting at first, you'll have one of the best experiences of your life.



CECILIA DEMEE DESKINS

- **Business Administration Maor**
- **Spring 2024**

Tell us a bit about yourself and what led you to apply for a scholarship to study abroad in Egypt.

I am a first-generation college student majoring in Business Administration with a focus on accounting. I have a strong interest in working and living abroad after graduation, which motivated me to pursue a minor in International Business, knowing that gaining international credits would be essential to achieving that goal. After experiencing a faculty-led study abroad trip to Singapore, I was inspired to take on a full semester abroad. I chose Egypt because it was a new and exciting destination that stood out for its unique position as a cross-section between Africa and the Middle East, offering rich cultural diversity. It felt like the perfect place to immerse myself in a new culture while expanding my academic horizons. However, as a low-income student receiving financial aid, I needed extra financial support to make this dream a reality. When I discovered that the opportunity came with a scholarship, I was convinced that I could make it happen, solidifying my decision to go.

In what ways do you feel you have grown personally and professionally during your time at AUC and in Egypt?

Personally, my time in Egypt pushed me to step outside my comfort zone, where I gained independence and confidence in navigating a completely different cultural environment. Being immersed in a new culture required me to adapt quickly and make decisions independently, which strengthened my sense of self-reliance. I learned to embrace uncertainty and take initiative, whether it was exploring the vibrant streets of Cairo or engaging in conversations with locals. This experience not only deepened my appreciation for diverse perspectives but also helped me cultivate resilience in the face of challenges. The friendships I formed with local and international students enriched my understanding of community and connection, making me more open-minded and adaptable.

Professionally, I honed my communication skills by interacting with people from diverse backgrounds and ideologies. This experience made me a stronger team player and broadened my perspective, allowing me to better understand how others think and approach problem-solving. I also learned to be more flexible, adapting to the local pace of life and living on “Egyptian time”, which often meant working later hours than I was used to as an American. All these adjustments helped me grow both personally and professionally, deepening my resilience and adaptability in new environments.

What role did connecting with AUC students or local communities play in your overall experience?

Connecting with AUC students and local communities was essential to my immersion in Egypt. Engaging in conversations about everyday life, local issues, and traditions not only deepened my understanding of Egyptian society but also highlighted the nuances of cross-cultural communication. I learned to navigate different perspectives and cultural norms, which enriched my interactions and allowed me to forge meaningful friendships. The local community was incredibly welcoming, and their eagerness to share their culture, customs, and stories had a lasting impact on me.

Through these connections, I gained insights into the subtleties of Egyptian social interactions, such as the importance of hospitality and the significance of family ties. Understanding these cultural nuances helped me appreciate the richness of the community I was part of, fostering a deeper sense of belonging. Overall, these experiences not only broadened my worldview but also enhanced my ability to communicate effectively across cultures, making my time in Egypt truly transformative.



Can you identify any specific moments or experiences in Egypt that catalyzed a significant change in your outlook on life?

One of the most transformative experiences I had in Egypt was observing Ramadan, particularly during iftar. I vividly remember a moment in Sharm el-Sheikh when I saw a man selflessly distributing dates to everyone in the street before iftar. This simple act of kindness encapsulated the communal spirit and dedication to tradition that characterized the month. It felt as though I had stepped into a different world, one where compassion and human connection were of the greatest importance.

This sense of community was further amplified during my time dining in the common room at AUC with both local and international students. As the sun set and the time for iftar approached, the atmosphere in the room would buzz with excitement and anticipation. The meals were always a vibrant array of traditional dishes, from fragrant rice and savory stews to sweet desserts and refreshing drinks. Gathering around the table, I felt a palpable sense of connection, not only to the food but to the diverse group of people around me. This exchange deepened my understanding of Ramadan and its importance in Egyptian culture, emphasizing the values of hospitality and generosity. I witnessed how the act of sharing food became a powerful symbol of unity, transcending individual differences and fostering a sense of belonging.

How has studying in Egypt and AUC influenced your understanding of global issues or cultural dynamics?

Studying in Egypt and at AUC significantly broadened my understanding of how cultural, political, and economic dynamics intersect on a global scale. Being immersed in a region with a rich history and complex socio-political landscape allowed me to witness firsthand the challenges and opportunities facing developing areas. This experience deepened my appreciation for international cooperation and the nuances of global issues.

One of the most impactful aspects of my time in Egypt was how it humanized the issues we often see portrayed in the news, particularly concerning Palestine. Many of my classmates had family members living in Gaza during the conflict, and hearing their personal stories and concerns brought a level of reality to the headlines. Their stories highlighted the emotional toll of these geopolitical issues, reminding me that behind every statistic and news report are real people facing unimaginable challenges. This understanding instilled a sense of empathy and compelled me to think critically about the complexities of the situation.

My interactions with international students from Europe also offered a valuable perspective on cultural dynamics and global issues. I was struck by how their approaches to various topics differed from mine, particularly regarding politics and social issues. For instance, their insights into European perspectives on American culture and foreign policy were eye-opening, prompting me to reflect on how my own background and identity shape my worldview. Engaging in these discussions not only challenged my assumptions but also helped me appreciate the unique traits I exhibit as an American.

In your opinion, how did The Nancy and Jonathan Wolf Global Academic Initiative award that you received impact your ability to study abroad?

The Nancy and Jonathan Wolf Global Academic Initiative award was crucial for my study abroad experience in Egypt. It provided the financial stability I needed to explore the country extensively. With the scholarship, I could travel to significant sites, engage with local communities, and fully immerse myself in the culture without the constant worry about finances. This financial support allowed me to concentrate on my studies and personal growth, enhancing my overall experience. The award transformed my journey, making it not just about academics but also about meaningful connections and unforgettable memories.

How would you summarize your experience studying abroad in Egypt in just a few sentences?

My time studying in Egypt was the highlight of my college experience and truly shaped me into a more well-rounded individual. The country's rich cultural and historical offerings, paired with my experiences at AUC, broadened my perspective and deepened my understanding of global dynamics. Engaging with local communities and immersing myself in the vibrant culture left a lasting impression, inspiring me to embrace new perspectives and approach life with a more open mind.

What advice would you give to prospective students who are interested in this opportunity?

I would say to absolutely take the leap and go for it! Studying abroad is an incredible opportunity that can significantly enhance your college experience and personal growth. Approach it with an open mind and a willingness to embrace the unknown. It's crucial to set aside any preconceived expectations, so be adaptable! You will face situations that push you out of your comfort zone, but these moments are often the most valuable for personal growth.

Also, make every day count! Planning ahead will significantly improve your experience. Make a list of places you want to visit, experiences you want to try, and goals you want to achieve during your time abroad. Take the time to explore your surroundings, attend local events, and engage in activities that interest you. Each day is a chance to learn something new, so seize those moments to create lasting memories.

Lastly, make it a point to connect with both local students and other international students. These relationships will provide insights and perspectives that will enrich your experience and broaden your understanding of the world. The friendships you build during this time can last a lifetime.





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