



## **AUS and Wharton MBA students conduct joint consulting project**

In a first for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, an MBA team from American University of Sharjah (AUS) recently partnered with a group of MBA students from the prestigious Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania to develop a market expansion plan for Maritime Industrial Services Co. Ltd (MIS), a leading contractor for the oil, gas and energy services industry based in Sharjah. The plan is part of MIS's 2013 strategic goals for reaching US\$1 billion in revenues with a net profit of US\$100 million.

A team of students from Wharton's San Francisco campus traveled to Sharjah to tour the MIS facility, interview key personnel and present a preliminary assessment of market opportunities. Over the ensuing weeks, the students focused on developing a strategy to take advantage of these possibilities. "This project was a fascinating and intense experience that gave us a rare opportunity to work collaboratively with teammates from partner school AUS. We were pushed outside our comfort zone and learned how to apply our experiences and skills to bring the project to fruition," said project leader Rita Wilson, speaking on behalf of the Wharton team.

This project is only the most recent highlight in the strategic relationship between MIS and AUS. A group of company executives recently completed an executive development program taught by AUS faculty, and a second group is now in session. Cooperation also extends to development of custom coursework on topics of strategic importance to MIS. Dr. Malcolm Richards, Dean of the School of Business and Management (SBM) at AUS, pointed out that MIS is "a leader in the development of executive talent in its diverse management team" and suggested that the company is "positioning itself well to take advantage of growth opportunities in the oil and gas industry."

For more than 30 years, Wharton's MBA students have developed consulting skills by participating in the Global Consulting Practicum (GCP). Small teams of Wharton students work closely with teams from selected partner schools to carry out real-world consulting projects for 10-12 companies around the world each year. Typical of the work done by the large consulting companies, the combined teams assess target markets, evaluate opportunities and develop effective market-entry strategies. In May each year, the students gather in Philadelphia or San Francisco to present their reports and recommendations to the clients.

Leonard M. Lodish, Leader/Co-founder of the GCP program and Vice Dean of the Wharton Program for Social Impact noted that this first project in the Arab Middle East proved a great success. Dr. Frank J. Lexa, UAE Country Manager for Wharton, agreed and thanked everyone involved for a job well done. Murugesu Ramachandran, Executive Vice President of MIS and Ossama Badr, Vice President for IT, Administration and HR, joined the combined team in Philadelphia to hear their report and consider their proposed approach. "We were very impressed with the level of understanding that the students illustrated of what is a fairly complex industry," said Ramachandran. "The proposal they have presented will be extremely beneficial to MIS in helping us refine our plans moving forward."

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