

The Petroleum Institute

Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.

Message to the PI Community on the State of the Institution

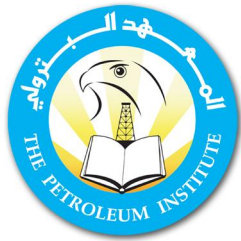
Spring 2009

I. Welcome and Introduction

Another fast-paced year has gone by and as the end of the Spring 2009 semester draws near, it is time to reflect upon our accomplishments, the direction in which we are moving and the shortcomings that need to be overcome in order to achieve our institutional goals and aspirations. The PI is only as good as the efforts of each individual member of the faculty, staff and administration. The quality of the PI, including student output, research conducted and name recognition is inextricably dependent upon the excellence of its people.

The PI opened its doors in 2001 with the mission to deliver two promises to its sponsors and the citizens of Abu Dhabi and the UAE. First, the PI must become a top-ranked engineering university with a special focus on the education of UAE Nationals. Second, the PI must educate future technological leaders who can meet the requirement of our sponsors in the oil/gas and broader energy industry. We are committed to delivering both promises.

With these thoughts in mind, let's briefly review the current status of the Institute, major milestones achieved, challenges yet to be overcome, and most importantly the role that each member of the PI family can play in achieving our goals.



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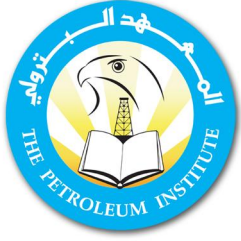
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II. State of the Institute

In less than 8 years we have developed from an 'idea' into a functional university with more than 1100 students enrolled at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. We can take pride in many other minor milestones as well as a number of major ones. I will list just a few here:

Milestone Achievements:

- Establishment of modern facilities and an infra-structure that includes exemplary undergraduate instructional laboratories, as well as fast growing facilities in support of research, including research labs and a library which started with some volumes donated by the ADNOC library in 2001, reaching 4837 volumes in 2005 and that today houses more than 35000 books and 360 paid journal subscriptions as well as electronic access to approximately 8000 journals.
- Licensure of the Institute by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for five years, till 2013.
- Preparation of the five degree programs for the site visit by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in April 2009 for review and consideration of long term accreditation of these programs.
- An internationally recognized accreditation, CEA, for teaching of the English program in the Foundation.
- Enrollment of more than 1,100 students as of fall 2008, which ranks us as the largest engineering school in the UAE in terms of number of Emirati engineering students enrolled.
- Establishment of the Women in Engineering program in the fall of 2006, with over 200 students now enrolled in all five engineering programs at the PI.
- Key recognition of the achievements of our faculty and students at international competitions, substantiating that the PI is on the right path to distinguishing itself in engineering and applied sciences.
- Establishment of the PI's affiliate middle and high school, the Glenelg School of Abu Dhabi, which will graduate students who are well prepared for entrance into the PI as freshman.
- Establishment of graduate studies and research, with more than 50 sponsored current research projects, in addition to a number of research initiation projects. In 2008 alone faculty/staff published more than 300 peer reviewed publications, with more than 130 of these publications appearing in recognized journals. The numbers represent a growth of more than 80% and nearly 40% when compared to 2006 and 2007, respectively.
- Establishment of distance learning facilities with the capabilities to broadcast graduate and continuing education courses to our sponsors and part-time graduate in remote sites, as well as provide for better interaction with our international partner institutions. Further enhancement of these facilities is in progress to expand in applicability areas.
- Establishment of three research centers at the PI. The TAKREER Refining and Petrochemical Research Center (TRC) will begin operating this year. The Borealis Innovation Center (located close to the Glenelg School) will be operational next year and will focus on innovative plastics and polymers. Finally, Phase I of the PI Research Center (PIRC), located near to the TRC, is expected to be operational in late 2011. Most recently, the PIRC was included as an essential part of a major multi-billion dollar contract between ADNOC and its partners; a contract that will last for the next 20 years. This particular contract commits 100 million USD to the PIRC, but more importantly, is the confirmation that the Research Center has become a part of official policy. We expect more contracts to be signed in the future. In fact, we are invited to provide information for another contract which is in the works with a major international partner of ADNOC. Very few other universities have this type of recognition and support from its sponsors.
- Further establishment of a modern infrastructure for the campus, including a uniquely designed student and conference center which is scheduled to open its doors in late 2010.
- Finally, we were honored that most recently H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan ordered the land currently occupied by the commercial enterprises (e.g. Milco factory, civil services, and private shops and vendors) be given to the Petroleum Institute. This provides the required space and campus facilities for the PI to move forward with its march toward its critical mission.



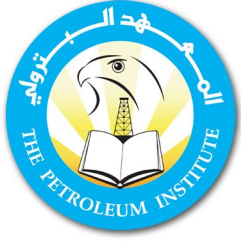
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Challenges Remaining:

Being as young an Institution as we are, we have many challenges and new endeavors ahead of us. We will be busy for the next few years! So what are the immediate challenges that we need to address? A few of the more important ones are as follows:

1. Lack of sufficient qualified UAE National student intake. The pool of such students (particularly male students) across the UAE is very limited while competition for students from various new universities is high. In the past three years alone, three major universities with engineering programs have opened in Abu Dhabi. These new institutions compete with the PI for the qualified students.
2. High teaching loads in certain departments. Due to a lack of sufficient professors (particularly in engineering) there is a risk of slowing the progress in research and infrastructure development if the issue is not addressed in a timely manner.
3. Slow acquisition of research and educational materials, mostly due to a shortage of sufficient support staff in various administration units and the lack of previously established infrastructure in these areas.
4. Housing and support services such as transportation remain a challenge for some of our faculty, staff and students. It should be noted that solutions are in progress with an expectation that in the next 12 months we will have Abu Dhabi public transportation extended to the PI and in two years the PI's own housing will be established and these issues fully resolved.
5. Establishing excellence in graduate studies and research without compromising the quality of undergraduate education. This is more of a charge than a challenge and requires careful planning and sufficient resources, including sufficient faculty and research staff to avoid competition between the two for limited resources. The goal is for graduate studies to improve and complete the total learning environment for students at the PI.
6. Responsible use of our resources, including energy and water consumption. We must be a role model in this area and I admit we have much more work to do.
7. Each year we have to improve on each of the above challenges and our progress against the goals. This is the only way we can resolve these issues of critical importance.



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III. What Next?

The history of great universities, like Cal Tech or Georgia Tech, indicates that the transformation into an internationally recognized institution takes about two decades that is if the circumstances are right. The right circumstances include having a clear vision, an unconditional commitment to being the best, the capacity to execute policy and the possession of steady "unfair" advantages. "Unfair advantages" are advantages that an institution has that others don't have and cannot easily obtain. The PI is fortunate in having a number of such advantages in abundance. These include the need for the Institute in the UAE, the vision and dedication of leadership to support us, our campus position in Abu Dhabi, and our close interaction with industry and international collaborators.

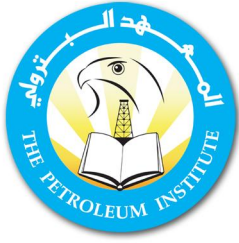
We should promptly overcome our challenges referenced earlier in order to strengthen and improve the Institute. I am glad to report that steps are being taken. For example, the Admissions Office is adding staff and resources to assist in recruiting qualified students. Second, we are actively involved in the recruitment of additional high caliber faculty and staff while reviewing options to recognize key contributors already at PI. This includes improved salary/benefits packages and/or long term contracts as applicable. Third, we are developing an infrastructure that will significantly speed up our acquisition procedures with a respect for the fiduciary use of resources. And, fourth, we are working to improve and streamline our operations to yield the best possible education to our students and in the best interests of the Institute as a whole. One such example is the implementation of the Comprehensive Academic Management Systems software in the Registrars' Office. This will substantially improve all aspects of student registration, record keeping and communications with faculty, management, sponsors and parents. We appreciate the team efforts of all contributors to the various infrastructure enhancement projects at PI.

We must retain our position as leaders in engineering education in the UAE and the broader region. We must demonstrate a willingness to be on the cutting edge with innovative programs. We must be comfortable with multi-disciplinary partnerships and close interactions in education and research. We must constantly look for, and respond quickly to exciting opportunities. We will not stay in front by following. To lead, these are the institutional characteristics that the PI can use to step ahead of the competition.

When the PI opened its doors a few years ago, we were the only game in town. This is no longer the case and by being creative and constantly out-performing our competition, we can move ahead in the game. This is no time to play it safe by doing business as usual.

We cannot afford to do those things that everyone else can do. Programs that are somewhat enhanced, but "more of the same," even when improved, will not make the sort of impact we need to distinguish us from others. We must be recognizably different and stand out in the crowd.

We have learned from experience that our future depends on implementing good ideas and eliminating those that are not good enough. Unfortunately, difficult choices must be made, and we must do what must be done in a timely manner. The significant progress we are making in redesigning the Foundation Program is an example of the openness of key contributors to the PI. I am confident that the new Foundation Program will be better for our students and for the faculty. I look forward to reporting to you the new proposed program when it is finalized and approved by the Board. I want to thank all of our colleagues who are contributing to this needed change.



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IV. Acknowledgments

The progress made and the success achieved by the PI has been a reflection of vision, devotion and contributions of many. We thank the leadership of the country for the vision and support that created the Petroleum Institute. We are grateful to H.E., PI Chairman of the Board, Mr. Yousef Omeir Bin Yousef for his dedication and endless efforts for the Institute. Without his leadership and devotion the PI would not be where it is today. We thank our Core sponsor, ADNOC, and its operating companies for their keen interest in the Institute. We also thank our four international sponsoring companies namely BP, JODCO, Shell and Total for their financial and in-kind support of the Institute.

We are very fortunate to be collaborating with many international partner institutions such as the Colorado School of Mines, the University of Maryland, Linz and Leoben Universities and most recently, the University of Minnesota. We are benefiting from the educational and research opportunities of these win-win collaborations.

The PI is a university with multiple integral divisions of responsibility. Each of these units is vital to the success and the stature of the PI. It is because of the active support and coordinated participation of all members of the PI family we can succeed.

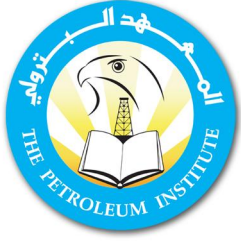
The PI is operating day-to-day by: the efforts of many contributors; the combined efforts of GSD and its hard-working staff; IT with their endless efforts despite shortage of staff; Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Department with their key efforts; and the library and other improved learning services such as the Enhanced Learning Center and Center for Teaching Excellence. We are grateful to the men and women who work in the offices of HR and Finance who contribute to the many critical functions of the PI. Support of the various major international conferences at PI has benefited from the strong support of HR/Administration and the finance departments.

We are grateful to the team in the Registrars' Office for their efforts and the substantial achievement in enhancing our student registration process and student record management. We commend the division of Student Affairs for their work from providing our students with field trip and internship opportunities, to catering services and management of the student accommodations, to providing administrative and counseling support, to coordinating and providing leisure activities for our students. Each of these offices is striving to improve the services they provide and we thank them for their efforts. Our students deserve the very best and we must make changes to ensure that the PI is renowned for providing the best quality student life of any university in the UAE.

We should never be remiss in acknowledging the outstanding work provided by the Administrative Assistants of the PI. Everyone knows how important their role is in the support of our every day academic functions. These individuals generally perform their duties in a cheerful and professional manner and it is through their dedication and sense of responsibility that the administrative workload of the PI is accomplished. I want to take the time to urge everyone to show your gratitude to the Administrative Assistant in your office. I will be the first among you, and I hereby praise and thank Desirée Mendez, as well as Sheikh Ali, in the office of the Provost. I cannot forget Naina Mohamed for all the support he provides us.

The prestige of the PI, the quality of student output, the quality of research conducted and name-recognition within the industrial and academic institutions locally, regionally and globally are all inextricably dependent upon the excellence of our faculty. It behooves us to thank the faculty for being a critical part in the development, growth, vision and accomplishments of the PI. I also would like to acknowledge the academic chairs, directors and senior administration for their keen interest and ability to envision higher levels of excellence for the Institute.

Last, but not least, the life and pride of the PI rests with our student body. We all know these individuals represent some of the best and brightest in the UAE. We often forget the difficulties they must overcome on their road to becoming an engineer. English is a second language for most of these students. Many have come from educational backgrounds where core skills are not mastered. This would be considered trivial in other parts of the world. We forget that our faculty is a diverse group from all over the world. Students must cope with, and adjust to different accents and dialects of English, and different expectations from each faculty member. Our students are bright, polite and they are the future industrial, and perhaps academic, leaders of the region. What they learn from the PI goes



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beyond just an education in engineering; we are preparing them to become the professionals that will move this nation forward. In order to ensure their success, we should never forget this larger charge for our students. While we deal with difficult academic issues found in all colleges, we must always maintain respect for our students so that they may leave the PI with the sense of dignity and pride of accomplishment that they have surely earned. In the hectic pace of the PI, sometimes we may forget this responsibility to the students. I want to encourage the entire PI to renew a sense of commitment for mutual respect to the students and each other.

V. Closing

In closing, I wish to acknowledge our constituents and many of you for the enormous contributions in building the Institution thus far. As an analogy we must think of ourselves as all pulling the rope in the same direction. The PI cannot become a great university by some pulling heavily while others remain on the sidelines watching. We must identify critical roles for each member of the PI family and provide a supportive environment for all. It is through your commitment and motivation and your talents and skills that we find inspiration and confidence to move forward toward our goal of creating a top-ranked engineering and applied Sciences University. We can all be proud of our participation in the achievement of this goal, one that reflects positively both institutionally and individually.

With very best wishes for the faculty, staff and students of the PI and their families,

Yours sincerely,

Michael M. Ohadi
Provost & Acting President