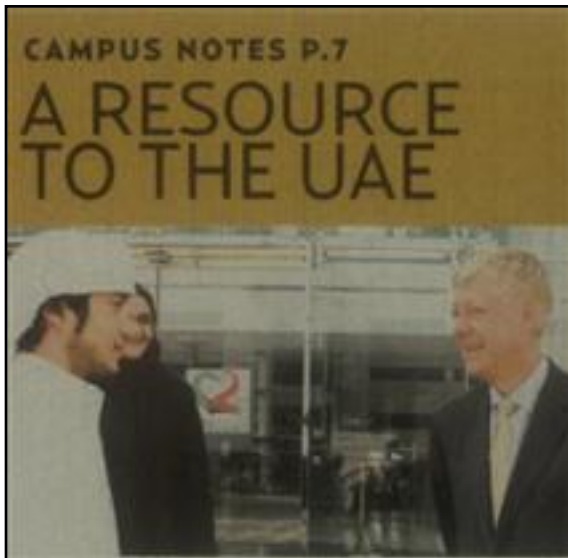


# A RESOURCE TO THE UAE

It's been five months since Professor Tod A. Laursen took the reigns as Khalifa University of Science Technology and Research's (Kustar) president and he is forging ahead with ambitious plans. These plans include key partnerships with government and international institutions, aggressively recruiting faculty, a medical school and programmes in nanotechnology, engineering civil security among others. The institution recently held its first graduation ceremony, where Laursen explained his vision for the university. Laursen, a mechanical engineer by training, spent 18 years as a faculty member at Duke University in North Carolina before joining Khalifa in August last year. As Middle East countries are rapidly diversifying their economies to move beyond oil and gas to knowledge-based economies, higher education with a focus on technology, research and innovation are seen as key to that transition experts say. In the UAE, Khalifa University is among those institutions that seek to produce graduates and knowledge that meet the country's needs.

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# A RESOURCE TO THE UAE

KHALIFA UNIVERSITY'S NEW PRESIDENT IS FAST-TRACKING IT BY RECRUITING AGGRESSIVELY AND TAILORING PROGRAMMES TO THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS

By AMELIA NAIDOO  
Campus Notes Editor

It's been five months since Professor Tod A. Laursen took the reins as Khalifa University of Science Technology and Research's (Kustar) president and he is forging ahead with ambitious plans.

These plans include key partnerships with government and international institutions, aggressively recruiting faculty, a medical school and programmes in nanotechnology, engineering, civil security among others. The institution recently held its first graduation ceremony, where Laursen explained his vision for the university.

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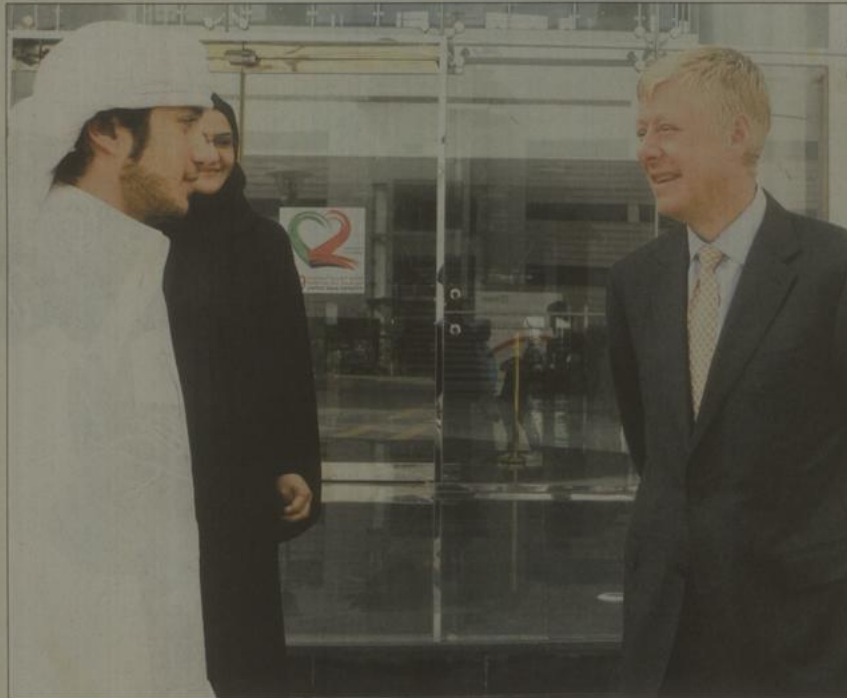
In the UAE, Khalifa University is among those institutions that seek to produce graduates and knowledge that meet the country's needs.

## Few constraints

"One of the truly great things in my view, about joining such a new institution, is the opportunity to truly build something new, and to do so with relatively few constraints, at least in comparison with most established institutions of higher learning," Laursen said.

Kustar was established by decree in 2007 and was merged with its predecessor institution, the Etisalat University College (EUC) established in 1989 in Sharjah.

Naturally new universities have to compete that much harder with estab-



ALEX WESTCOTT/Gulf News

Professor Tod Laursen, president of Khalifa University of Science Technology and Research based in Abu Dhabi, wants to achieve what other universities have taken decades to do.

lished ones, but Laursen prefers to view challenges as opportunities.

"One of the things with being a young institution is that you can do things in an innovative way. Established institutions are great because they have the success track record and people are drawn to them. But the challenge is that it's very hard to change things."

At Khalifa University, there is a great opportunity to look at things in a different way, change the curricula or set a research agenda with few obstacles he said.

Kustar is in the process of signing various agreements with overseas institutions and local federal bodies. Among them is a partnership with Mubadala to develop a research cen-

tre as well as the Advanced Technology Investment Company (Atic) towards the establishment of the Atic-Kustar Semiconductor Research and Development Centre at Kustar's new campus.

## Medical school

Although most of Kustar's initiatives are in technical fields such as engineering, semiconductors, aerospace and nanotechnology, it is also planning to establish a school of medicine.

"We are laying the groundwork but we are working to identify a North American partner institutions for the development of the medical school," he said. "What I want to emphasise about our research approach is that we're look-

ing for topics that will be of direct interest to industry. We try to be motivated by Abu Dhabi's Vision 2030 and the regional and development plan to make sure our graduates will find good jobs."

With the varsity's current aggressive recruitment drive, Laursen said he intends to bring world class colleagues with a broad experience to create a holistic teaching environment.

"We will do in years what it has taken similar institutions many decades to achieve, thanks to a meeting of minds between informed and passionate governmental leaders, world-class technical minds and some of the brightest future talent we have here in the UAE today. Through

Khalifa University we will export — not import! Home-grown thinking that is going to make a difference to potentially millions of lives around the world and showcase what we here in the UAE can do a global audience."

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