



Partnering to Achieve Notable Firsts in Kuwait

The American University of Kuwait has been breaking new ground since its gleaming new buildings first rose from the sand in 2004.

Patterned after the American liberal arts model of education, the independent, private university broke new ground when it offered admission to the nearly 40 percent of Kuwait's population who are not Kuwaiti nationals, a group that has historically had little access to public institutions of higher education in Kuwait. AUK was also the first university in Kuwait to have a fully integrated student services platform and the first to have a comprehensive mobile strategy. As it has achieved these notable firsts and built its reputation as a leading university recognized locally, regionally, and internationally, the institution has been supported by Ellucian.

"The demand for technology has increased and the needs of the institution have increased since we first opened our doors," said Rusty Bruns, IT director at AUK. "With our partnership with Ellucian, we have been able to stay a step ahead of other institutions in the region. Ellucian provides us with help whenever we ask for it, and they upgrade their products to keep AUK on top of the latest technologies."

Forming the core of AUK's leading-edge technology infrastructure are Banner by Ellucian, the Ellucian Luminis Platform, and Ellucian Mobile.

Ellucian worked closely with staff at AUK to bring up Banner at the same time the university buildings were being constructed. A rapid implementation made it possible for the university to offer the necessary administrative processes when it first opened. As the needs of AUK and its students have evolved, the institution has been able to bring on new

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Profile:

- Enrollment: 2,100 students
- www.auk.edu.kw

Challenges:

- Meeting expanding and evolving needs of students and growing university
- Provide leading-edge applications that mirror university's reputation

Solutions:

- Banner® by Ellucian®
- Ellucian Luminis™ Platform
- Ellucian Mobile

Results:

- AUK was first university in Kuwait to offer integrated student services platform
- AUK was first university to provide mobile applications
- University is meeting users' expectations for services

functionality and integrated third-party software into the scalable and extensible Banner platform.

Today, students, faculty, and administrators can access all the resources they need through the university's Luminis portal. They also can execute many of their administrative processes through self-service applications. Ellucian recognized AUK's strong adoption of technology solutions when it presented the university with the Innovative Technology Award at the Ellucian Middle East conference in 2012.

Self service makes processes convenient and efficient

"The Luminis Platform and self-service applications are the main tools used by students to do all campus related activities. It's used by students to add/drop classes, check their grades and schedule, make online payments, and much more," said Bruns. "Today's students expect services to be available at a time and place convenient to them, and this requires putting services online. Having a portal where students can access all their services in one place increases their satisfaction with the university."

Faculty members use self-service applications to upload grades for students, check their rosters, and advise and interact with students. And they are assigned their schedule of classes through Banner. Faculty also take care of their personal

administrative tasks online like checking leave balances and pay.

In the administrative area, all university financial transactions are done using Banner. Administrators can monitor their budgets, and gain electronic approval on purchase orders. They also can approve contracts and timesheets for their student workers online.

Users can easily find the resources they need through the consistent interface throughout the platform.

"Consistency is very important," said Bruns. "We want users to easily find what they are looking for and get things done faster. When you make things easy for people to do, they will use the resources online. But if it takes too long, they will take another route that is less efficient."

Likewise, the consistent interface among the various Banner forms increases staff productivity, said Bruns. "One of the best things about Banner is its interface. The feel and look of Banner as you move from one form to another is consistent."

"Consistency helps the user to concentrate on doing the work assigned to him instead of being distracted by the inconsistency between the forms. The user can focus on what he needs to do rather than think about how to do it," added Hussein Diab, senior database administrator at AUK.



Banner has enabled other productivity gains through automation of tasks. For example, IT integrated Banner with its active directory. When a new student is entered in Banner, a new email address is automatically generated on the active directory. Before, IT had to manually create the emails.

Mobile applications set AUK apart

The newest and most popular functionality brought up by AUK is its mobile platform. The use of mobile devices in the Middle East is among the highest in the world. In fact, in Kuwait, the number of mobile subscriptions far exceeds the country's inhabitants, according to ChartsBin (<http://chartsbin.com/view/1881>) Once again, AUK was ahead of the curve, being the first university in Kuwait and the second in the region to offer mobile applications to students.

"It's important to meet students' expectations and to be ahead of our peers," said Bruns. "Students from AUK are proud to show the university's mobile apps to their friends whose institutions don't offer them. That status is very important in the region. As soon as we brought up our first apps, students started asking for more."

In 2012, AUK offered its first mobile applications using Ellucian's first generation mobile software. Now the institution is deploying Ellucian Mobile which helps AUK advance its mobile initiatives faster and extend applications and services to a broader

range of campus stakeholders. AUK values the fact that the solution is available on the iOS and Android mobile platforms.

"Our students typically have two phones," said Diab. "To reach the highest number of users, we need a mobile application that works on any type of device."

AUK is leveraging the solution's customization features to brand their mobile experience, and the university also likes the new solution's slick user interface.

"The GUI is the best thing about the Ellucian mobile application for users," said Diab. "And it's easy to bring up new apps and change the look and feel of them to meet our requirements and image."

Quantifying IT initiatives

Meeting users' expectations and delivering operational efficiencies are notable goals. In addition; however, AUK attempts to quantify its IT achievements.

"We take a strategic business approach to IT," explained Bruns. "We ask ourselves, 'what is the impact on IT, our customers, the business, and the university?' If our business provides the best product, our customers (students) receive a quality education, find gainful employment, and make a difference. In the end, this brands the university as a successful higher education institution."

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Rusty Bruns, IT Director

Ellucian proved its ability to save the institution measurable costs shortly after Bruns arrived in AUK at 2011. He was asked to resolve a 5-year dispute with a vendor over licensing. The potential cost of resolving the issue was more than \$700,000. Bruns asked Ellucian if they could help address the issue. Within six months, the problem was resolved at a cost of \$375,000. And with the help of Ellucian's technology, AUK has expanded its number of virtual machines from 20 to 34 in the last year, cutting costs by \$70,000.

"Right away, Ellucian showed me that they are a good partner. Ellucian is like part of our family. I can always count on them to support the university in what we are trying to achieve," said Bruns.

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**Hussein Diab,
Senior Database Administrator**

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Ellucian helps education institutions thrive in an open and dynamic world. We deliver a broad portfolio of technology solutions, developed in collaboration with a global education community, and provide strategic guidance to help education institutions of all kinds navigate change, achieve greater transparency, and drive efficiencies. More than 2,400 institutions in 40 countries around the world look to Ellucian for the ideas and insights that will move education forward, helping people everywhere discover their futures through learning.

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