

SCHOOL'S IN, CANADIAN STYLE

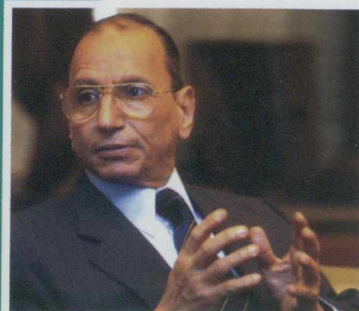
A new private university in Cairo will offer the best of Canadian higher education in an Egyptian setting—as well as long-term benefits for both countries.

A new university opens its doors in Cairo this fall with a distinctly Canadian look and feel. Al-Ahram Canadian University, an educational hybrid set up to deliver the best of Canadian higher education in an Egyptian academic setting, takes in its first contingent of 1,000 students in September.

Students at the new university, which has a 200-acre, \$180-million campus on the outskirts of Cairo, will take English-language courses using curricula, teaching methods and administrative practices set out by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). They will graduate with degrees equal to those offered by Canadian universities.

"We want people who are well prepared, well trained and well educated according to the Canadian system," says Dr. Farouk Ismail, president of the private institution. "We are committed to preparing young

individuals from Egypt and abroad to be leaders and intellectuals, and to instilling in them the critical thinking that underpins responsible citizenship and social and ethical responsiveness in the global knowledge society."



University president Dr. Farouk Ismail says the private institution will produce graduates who are "well prepared, well trained and well educated according to the Canadian system."



The Al-Ahram Canadian University campus: Delivering the best of Canadian higher education in an Egyptian academic setting.

The university is a business venture of the state-controlled Al-Ahram Establishment, a diverse media empire that includes the largest-circulation Arabic daily newspaper in the Middle East, *Al-Ahram*. The media organization hired the AUCC as technical advisors to create a new institution from scratch—one that breaks from Egyptian tradition.

For example, embracing Canadian-style education means a shift in focus to "student-led research" as opposed to rote learning, as well as the use of Canadian reading materials and the application of successful Canadian innovations such as cooperative education and internships that embed practical experience into the curriculum. A common first year gives students a broad foundation instead of immediate specialization in their field of study.

"I need the Canadian method of education to be here in Egypt," says Ismail, a former president of Cairo University who was appointed by President Hosni Mubarak as chairman of the education and research committee of the Egyptian senate.

The new university, developed through face-to-face meetings and other consultations between Canadian and Egyptian professors and education officials, promises an experience that meets academic standards in both countries.

"We are not taking a Canadian curriculum and imposing it in Egypt," says Walid Madhoun, the AUCC's project leader. "We are showing the Egyptians a curriculum development model that will lead to a curriculum that is commensurate in quality to that in Canada."

While there are a number of bilateral educational activities between Canadian universities and those of other countries, this is the first to happen on such a scale, making it groundbreaking for Canada's academic and political relations abroad. Several notable Canadians will serve on the institution's board of trustees, including Lloyd Axworthy, president of the University of Winnipeg; Lise Bissonnette, the chair and chief executive officer of the National Library of Quebec; Philip MacKinnon,

and political relations with people in the region."

The university will grow in phases. In the first, four Canadian universities that are members of the AUCC have been matched with the institution's initial four faculties: mass communication and journalism (Carleton University); computer science (École Polytechnique de Montréal); business administration (McMaster University); and pharmacy (Memorial University). Additional Canadian institutions will join as Al-Ahram expands; by 2010, the university is expected to have its full complement of 12 liberal arts and professional faculties and a population of 10,000 students.

Carleton University team leader Allan Thompson, an assistant professor of journalism, says he and his colleagues are offering wide-ranging advice, from how to set up co-op job placements to which Canadian textbooks should be used in the classroom. "It's not about creating a mirror image of Carleton in Egypt," he says. "It is an Egyptian-based journalism faculty that meets Canadian standards."

For Canada's scholars, he adds, the opportunity to assist in the birth of a new university—a rarity at home—is remarkable.

That's also true for Ismail. After more than 40 years in higher education, the former engineering dean is eager to adopt Canadian teaching practices that better serve Egypt's fast-growing post-secondary population.

"We have to prepare graduates to meet the requirements of this increasingly global world," he observes. "We have to open all doors and learn from others." ❁

Canada's Ambassador to Egypt; and Michel de Salaberry, the previous ambassador to Egypt. As well, Egyptian scholars now living in Canada will make up about 40 percent of the initial group of 50 to 60 faculty members.

"As countries look to expand their capacity to offer quality higher education to meet the growing demands of their citizens, many will seek to cooperate with Canadian universities," predicts Karen McBride, vice-president of international relations for the AUCC.

Jean-Philippe Tachdjian, Deputy Director of International Trade Canada's Education Marketing Group, who was based in Cairo when the project first started, sees the university as offering long-term benefits for Canada.

"In the future, thousands of Egyptians and people from throughout the Middle East will proudly say they are graduates of Al-Ahram Canadian University," Tachdjian says. "As these graduates come into positions of influence, there will be very positive consequences for Canada in terms of public diplomacy, trade

A world of educational opportunities

What better way to discover the world, develop new skills and interact with different cultures than to study in a foreign country?

Young people are increasingly interested in pursuing such opportunities, and the demand for international scholarships—both from Canadians interested in going abroad and from international students wanting to study in Canada—is on the rise.

Governments around the world have recognized the value of such international exchanges and have created programs to help alleviate some of the cost of studying overseas. Canadians wishing to study abroad and foreign students interested in coming to Canada can benefit from Canada's active participation in multilateral and bilateral education agreements with a number of foreign countries including Chile, China, Columbia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Russia, South Korea and Spain.

Additional opportunities are also available to Canadians through Canada's membership in the Commonwealth, La Francophonie and the Organization of American States. Scholarships offered through these organizations and their member countries apply to graduate and post-graduate studies and research, range from six months to four years in length and generally cover admission fees, travel costs, monthly allocations and health insurance.

Those interested in studying overseas who would like more information on country-specific criteria and how to apply for assistance from the Government of Canada or foreign governments should visit the main Web site on Canadian and international scholarship programs at www.scholarships.gc.ca.

International students from La Francophonie member countries are also eligible to apply for scholarships available through Le programme canadien de bourses de la Francophonie. More information can be found at www.pcbf.qc.ca and a complete list of member countries at www.francophonie.org.