

# Middle East Fellowship Provides Great Opportunity

Nancy Kachouh, first recipient of the Middle East Fellowship, is already advancing the visions of ACI and the ACI Foundation

**J**udging the Fiber-Reinforced Polymer Composites Student Competition was just one of the items on Nancy Kachouh's agenda at the ACI Concrete Convention in Cincinnati, OH, this past October. The ACI Foundation's first Middle East Fellowship recipient, Kachouh also found time to attend committee meetings, meet with other concrete industry professionals, and network at numerous convention events.

The ACI Foundation awarded the fellowship to Kachouh for the 2019-2020 academic year, and she felt honored to be the recipient. "As the winner of the first Middle East Fellowship, I received an educational stipend for buying books, new software, and materials that will help me finish my PhD studies," says Kachouh. "I was also recognized in *Concrete International* magazine and by the ACI Foundation and received an invitation to attend the ACI Concrete Convention in Québec City, Canada, which was one of the most exciting and interesting experiences in my life."

"The conventions gave me the opportunity to network with students and influential leaders in the concrete industry," says Kachouh. "Everyone was very kind, and the ACI Foundation even assigned a mentor. It's important to know that it's not just about giving money and letting the students go. The ACI Foundation helped with all the travel and details, which is so important for a student." Kachouh has been invited to the Convention in Rosemont/Chicago, IL, in March 2020.

## A Legacy

Kachouh is highly motivated to serve the design and construction community. "After receiving my bachelor's degree in mathematics, I decided to continue my studies in civil engineering," says Kachouh. "My dad was a contractor



In Cincinnati, OH, during the ACI Fiber-Reinforced Polymer Composites Student Competition, Nancy Kachouh (center) interacted with student participants and served as a competition judge



Nancy Kachouh and Siham AlShanti, both from United Arab Emirates University in Abu Dhabi, UAE, interviewed for the Middle East Fellowship during the ACI Concrete Convention in Québec City, QC, Canada. As the recipient, Kachouh received \$10,000 USD in educational support, full funding to attend two additional ACI conventions, and more



**Nancy Kachouh (front row second) attended the ACI Excellence in Concrete Construction Awards Gala in Cincinnati, OH, along with other fellowship recipients and ACI Foundation leadership. Twelve innovative concrete projects from around the world were celebrated at the event**

and worked in the field of engineering in Lebanon. He inspired me, and I love civil engineering firstly because of him. I saw him involved in projects, dealing with engineers, so he transmitted a passion for construction and engineering to me.”

Kachouh received her master of engineering degree with distinction in civil engineering from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and her MS in civil engineering from the University of Balamand, Lebanon. Now a second-year PhD student and research assistant in the civil engineering department at United Arab Emirates University, Kachouh heard about the fellowship through one of her professors, who is a member of the ACI Faculty Network, a free group for educators interested in ACI and the concrete industry.

Kachouh’s primary research interest is structural/material engineering with an emphasis on studying the behavior of concrete structures made of sustainable construction materials and the use of sustainable composite-based systems to strengthen concrete structures. Her doctoral research is focused on the use of steel-fiber recycled-aggregate concrete in sustainable construction.

## Beyond Research

While research is a major focus, service to the student and professional communities is also important to Kachouh. In addition to working toward her PhD, Kachouh has worked with Hilal El-Hassan to organize a new ACI student chapter at the university. “I’m planning for this chapter to be very active and to participate in competitions locally and perhaps internationally with ACI,” says Kachouh.

And she has been active beyond the university setting. The UAE Chapter – ACI invited Kachouh to be a speaker at the Big 5 conference in Dubai, UAE, in November 2019. The Big 5 is the largest exhibition dedicated to the

Funded by ACI and administered by the ACI Foundation, the Middle East Fellowship is open to graduate students currently attending a university in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE. The winning student receives \$10,000 USD in educational support, full funding to attend two ACI conventions, and more.

ACI Foundation fellowship and scholarship award applications for the 2021-2022 academic year will open July 1, 2020. All applicants must secure two endorsements with at least one endorser being an ACI member. For more information and applications, visit [www.acifoundation.org/scholarships](http://www.acifoundation.org/scholarships). To learn more about ACI’s student programs and resources, visit [www.concrete.org/students](http://www.concrete.org/students).

infrastructure and heavy construction industry in the Middle East. Held November 25-28, 2019, at the Dubai World Trade Centre, the event hosted over 68,000 attendees and hundreds of local and international companies showcasing innovative solutions and products. Kachouh spoke on the use of steel fibers in enhancing the performance of concrete made with recycled aggregate.

## Always Advancing

The Middle East Fellowship is one part of ACI’s comprehensive plan to increase knowledge-sharing in the Gulf region and beyond. ACI Foundation fellowship and scholarship awards are made possible through generous contributions by ACI, ACI chapters, corporate donors, and individuals within the concrete community.

The purpose of the ACI Foundation’s student fellowship and scholarship program is to identify, attract, and develop outstanding professionals for productive careers in the concrete industry. For the 2019-2020 academic year, the ACI Foundation distributed more than \$200,000 to 19 deserving students through the support of ACI, ACI chapters, generous donors, and industry partners. For the 2019-2020 fellowship academic year, 31 students applied for the Middle East Fellowship; for the 2020-2021 academic year, over 200 students applied for the Middle East Fellowship—the winning student will be announced following in-person interviews at the Convention in Rosemont/Chicago. Student interest in the Middle East Fellowship (and all ACI Foundation fellowships) far exceeds current fund availability, and the ACI Foundation welcomes the support of interested donors to fund future fellowships for students who share Kachouh’s passion for ACI and the concrete industry.

The ACI Foundation believes attracting students to the concrete industry provides both excellent career opportunities for students and helps to secure a bright future for the concrete industry. These fellowships and scholarships showcase the ACI Foundation’s goals of investing in people and the future of the industry.