FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 5, 2026
info@nusacc.org

# GCC Secretary General Receives Inaugural Global U Alumni Impact Award from the University of Utah

***NUSACC: "Ambassador Albudaiwi has done an extraordinary job of building bridges and connecting cultures throughout his professional life."***

***University of Utah: Albudaiwi's path from campus to the Secretary General's office in Riyadh "exemplifies the power of a University of Utah education to prepare graduates for leadership on the global stage."***

The National U.S.-Arab Chamber of Commerce (NUSACC) recently traveled to Utah to participate in an award ceremony honoring H.E. Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC). Albudaiwi, a graduate of the University of Utah, was selected to receive that university's inaugural Global U Alumni Impact Award.

Mitzi Montoya (left), Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, presented the University of Utah's inaugural Global U Alumni Impact Award to H.E. Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi (right), Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC).

"Ambassador Albudaiwi has done an extraordinary job of building bridges and connecting cultures throughout his professional life," noted David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO. "It is fitting that he should return to Utah, where his relationship with the United States began, to receive this distinguished award. NUSACC congratulates His Excellency on this well-deserved honor!"

Utah Natural History Museum

Utah Natural History Museum, where the award ceremony took pace.

Utah State Capitol Building

Dr. Randy McCrillis, the University of Utah's Vice Provost for Global Engagement.

Dr. Randy McCrillis, the university's Vice Provost for Global Engagement, said, "Albudaiwi cites skills honed at the University of Utah – communication, cross-cultural understanding, and strategic leadership – as instrumental to his success and lifelong career. His path from the University of Utah campus to the Secretary General's office in Riyadh exemplifies the power of a Utah education to prepare graduates for leadership on the global stage."

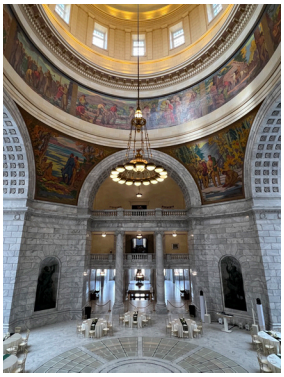
## Solidarity in a Time of Need

In his acceptance speech, Albudaiwi expressed his thanks to Utah for its outstanding hospitality. "Thirty-five years ago, I walked across this campus as a young man from Kuwait, carrying a degree in Communications and no idea of the road ahead," he said. "This university did not simply educate me; it shaped me. It taught me how to think, how to listen, and how to see the world through eyes other than my own. I arrived here as a boy. Utah returned me to Kuwait as a man. So, thank you, Utah, for the experience of a lifetime."

H.E. Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, Secretary General of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC).

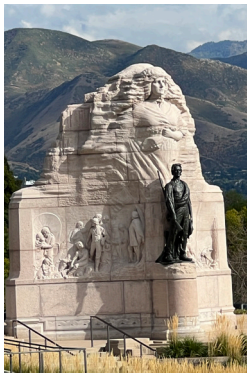
Albudaiwi went on to say, "In August 1990, while I was a student here, my country was invaded. I was a young man stranded in the American West, watching my homeland's fate unfold on the evening news, the same news that I had been trained to analyze in my mass communication classes."

He continued, "And here is what I will never forget. The people of Salt Lake City did not treat me, nor my Kuwaiti colleagues, as strangers from a distant crisis. People we had never met offered help, a word of comfort, a hand on the shoulder. People who owed us nothing gave us everything that mattered: Solidarity."



Utah State Capitol

Mormon Temple



Mormon Battalion Monument on the grounds of the Utah State Capitol Building

Welcome message at the Red Butte Garden & Arboretum

"I have spent thirty-five years in diplomacy since that day," he noted. "I can tell you that no communiqué has ever taught me more about international relations than the kindness of the people of this city in the summer of 1990. They taught me that partnership is not a document. It is a decision – made by ordinary people – to stand with someone in their darkest hour."

Albudaiwi "connected the dots" between then and now: "The solidarity that was shown to me as a student, we in the GCC now extend, as a matter of policy, to our region." He referenced the GCC's bridge-building efforts in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, and Palestine. "This is who we are: Not a bloc that watches crises, but a council that answers them."

"Some regions export their conflicts," Albudaiwi said. "The Gulf, increasingly, exports solutions. We have proven – in Europe's war, in Asia's tensions, in our own neighborhood's crisis – that the GCC is a reliable partner for peace. That reputation was not given to us. It was *earned*, one act of trust at a time."

In this photo: H.E. Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi (center), Secretary General of the GCC, flanked by former Governor Gary R. Herbert (left), Utah's 17th Governor, and David Hamod (right), NUSACC's President & CEO.

He concluded, "Somewhere in this room, or in a lecture hall across this campus, sits a young woman or a young man from the Gulf – or from Utah – who will one day carry responsibilities they cannot yet imagine. To them I say: I sat where you sit. I know the doubts, the distance from home, the question of whether any of this will matter. *It will*. Every idea you test here, every friendship you build across a border, every assumption you allow this place to challenge – these are the raw materials of the world that you will lead."

Albudaiwi's full speech may be found here.

The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square

## Strengthening the U.S.-GCC Partnership

David Hamod, NUSACC's President & CEO, traveled to Utah to offer keynote remarks at the University of Utah's Gulf States Forum.

"When we look at the Utah/GCC relationship – the focus of today's Forum – this partnership makes perfect sense," he noted. "There are extraordinary opportunities for collaboration in high tech, mining, healthcare, agriculture, tourism, and financial services – to name just a few. Utah is one of the most diversified, innovative economies in the United States."

He continued, "Utah has a lot to offer . . . and so does the GCC, showcasing extraordinary growth since its formation in 1981 – just 45 years ago. The GCC is one of the few regions of the world where U.S. relationships may be found at virtually every level: Energy and security, of course, but also high tech, trade, investment, higher education, innovation, R&D, training, and diplomacy."

In Salt Lake City, NUSACC's David Hamod (center) was pleased to participate in a performance by the Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square. Here, Hamod is welcomed by former Utah Governor Mike Leavitt (right) and Derek Miller (left), President & CEO of the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce.

Historically, Hamod noted, "The United States focused on what the GCC needed from our country. But increasingly, this has become a two-way street, with a growing recognition that America needs access to Gulf markets, capital, energy relationships, diplomatic channels, and regional partnerships. And Gulf investment is increasingly flowing back into the U.S. economy, playing a meaningful role in job-creation here in the United States."

"GCC countries host major U.S. military facilities, work closely with Washington on regional security, and serve as diplomatic intermediaries when the U.S. needs back-channel partners," Hamod said. "With very little fanfare or limelight, the GCC nations have quietly helped to advance America's interests in the MENA region."

"The GCC sits at the intersection of energy markets, global shipping routes, capital flows and supply chains," Hamod pointed out. "If you didn't know where the Strait of Hormuz was six months ago, I bet that you do now! When something happens in the Arabian Gulf region, the economic impact can be felt very quickly in American businesses and households."

Hamod concluded his remarks by accentuating the vital role of international students in the United States, highlighting bright young students of yesteryear who have become global leaders today, like H.E. Jasem Albudaiwi – "one of those promising students who came to study in the USA to the benefit of all of us."

"Today, these opportunities for intercultural exchange and relationships are more important than ever," Hamod opined. "Higher education and study abroad open doors that we never knew existed. We – all of us – need to work together to keep those doors open! "

A video of Hamod's speech may be found here, and Hamod's written remarks may be found here.

## University of Utah on the Global Stage

At last count, 3,559 international students were enrolled at the University of Utah, representing 111 countries. The Office for Global Engagement oversees international initiatives, learning abroad programs, international student and scholar services, and global partnerships across 171 countries, including those at the University of Utah Asia Campus in Incheon, South Korea.

The University of Utah recently collected these honors:

- Ranked #9 in Entrepreneurship in the United States
  (*U.S. News & World Report*, 2027)

- Ranked #91 among Public Universities in the United States
  (*U.S. News & World Report*, 2027)

- An R1 top-tier Research University
  (R1 Carnegie Classification®)

- Ranked #1 Public University in Game Design Worldwide
  (*The Princeton Review*, 2020)

The University of Utah cited the life work of Albudaiwi as a prime example of the university's mission to "engage locally and globally to promote knowledge, innovation, and service."

Mitzi Montoya, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, commended Albudaiwi for his contributions to international diplomacy, his leadership of one of the most influential regional organizations in the world, and his enduring connection to the university. "His Excellency's career demonstrates how a U education can serve as a foundation for leadership and meaningful international engagement. We hope that his story inspires current students and fellow alumni to think about the ways that they can use their education, careers, and networks to make a difference."

The National U.S.–Arab Chamber of Commerce is America's #1 commercial gateway to the Middle East and North Africa. Now celebrating its 50th anniversary, NUSACC is America's longest-serving organization dedicated exclusively to U.S.–Arab business. The Chamber is officially recognized by both the League of Arab States and the Union of Arab Chambers, and it is widely regarded as the voice of American business in the 22 countries of the Arab world. In 2024, NUSACC was honored with the E Star Award for Export Excellence – conferred by the President of the United States – the only Chamber of its kind to ever receive this high distinction *twice*.

nusacc.org

WASHINGTON D.C. (HEADQUARTERS) • LOS ANGELES • NEW YORK
1025 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, NW • SUITE 1000 • WASHINGTON D.C. 20036
TEL: (202) 289-5920 • WWW.NUSACC.ORG