Royal Holloway, University of London  
17 May 2007

Citation for Mr Yazan Mufti

Chairman of Council, it is my pleasure to present Mr Yazan Mufti.

The reasons for this honour are his commitment to the world of business, science and education and his service to the College.

That arch-cynic George Bernard Shaw said, in a quote which sounds apposite but also remarkably uncomfortable: “The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”

Well not so, as Yazan Mufti demonstrates. In every sense a reasonable man but someone who deployed an awesome range to talents to make progress in many endeavours, not least in demonstrating that ‘globalization’ is no abstract or nebulous concept, but a way for like-minded people to work together in delivering benefit for institutions and their people.

Yazan, born in Amman Jordan in 1952 came to the UK in 1970 to do A levels and then Electronics at Loughborough. He faced his first challenge in bridging two very different education systems, but the challenge taught him persistence, which was later to prove the foundation of success.

While in the Midlands he took up flying as a hobby at Castle Donnington. He describes himself as the worst navigator in the land, getting lost regularly; his flights were training missions for radar operators!

Yazan returned to Jordan and took a research job at the Royal Scientific Society in Amman, then joined a private company in Saudi Arabia in systems development before returning to Jordan to start his first company, initially in a niche area of telecommunications but growing into the largest Systems Engineering firm in Jordan.
Through his life he has continued to combine science and business with a joint patent application in the US, related to creatine and BSE. One of his related companies recently got an FDA approval for a medicine that improves the quality of life for Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis patients.

Yazan applied his business knowledge personally to solve real-world problems but discovered that doing good can also be tricky! Never more than when trying to help a remote village in Jordan overcome a malnutrition problem by giving the village 500 egg-laying chickens received from a benefactor. In true engineering style a manual was produced on how to look after the chickens which were distributed to the qualifying families. Enthusiastically he returned a week later to find a very angry man – the egg salesman had found the bottom dropped out of his market. Fearing reprisals Yazan avoided the village for a couple of weeks but when he plucked up the courage to revisit the place, he found the same man quiet and happy. ‘They ate the chickens’- he said.

Yazan developed a strong interest in both advising and assisting UK businesses from the very smallest one or two-men operations through to multi-national companies, helping them to compete overseas particularly in the Middle East. On many occasions his involvement (often in the background) has strengthened a UK company’s position in the face of strong international competition.

Yazan married Janet, born in Winchester to Jordanian parents, having met her through family links at Sandhurst. They have three children and the eldest, Dina, has three degrees from Royal Holloway, in Media and Business. When the family moved to the UK in 2002 Dina was living at Kingswood Hall and, like any student was less than amused to find that the rest of the family had chosen to live half a mile away from the College!

Yazan and Janet are dedicated parents, doing whatever needs to be done to assure that their children get the very best education possible and launch them well in their own careers. To this end Yazan has considerably supported the institutions charged with the education of his children.

He served as governor and chairman of the International Community School in Amman. His time there demonstrated a passion for the ventures he undertook and an enthusiasm and willingness to assimilate new understanding about education to help these ventures improve and succeed – including major building projects and educational initiatives involving technology.
His energy, enthusiasm and willingness to learn and promote new ways to deal with challenges, reflects his own desire to be a lifelong learner and an inspiration to those around him.

These are the characteristics that shape his engagement with Royal Holloway. He came to know the College, initially looking for opportunities for our scientists to work with companies or universities in Jordan, building on his commitment to both countries. He currently acts as an overseas ambassador for us, promoting us to Jordanian students – with considerable success. And, notably through hosting a recent visit by our Principal, he has taken the College into the heart of Jordanian society. Our aspiration to be a global university can only be furthered with the aid of partners and supporters like Yazan.

Yazan is a man who helps bring peace and understanding in our world. His close friends and colleagues are from many different countries, religions, and fields of work. His motto is that 'If you are a “good person”, then he is a good friend—regardless of who or what you are.

Yazan can be profiled as

- A man who makes a habit of spotting potential and a practice of bringing that potential to a successful outcome.
- Someone passionate about education, and doubly passionate about trans-national education.
- Someone who is committed to both his birthplace and to his adopted home.
- Someone who is equally at home piloting a plane at high altitude and firmly on the ground in the science lab.

My opening remarks drew upon George Bernard Shaw - let me finish with Samuel Johnson. He said 'Between falsehood and useless truth there is little difference. As gold which he cannot spend will make no man rich, so knowledge which cannot apply will make no man wise'.

Yazan Mufti indeed believes in the application of knowledge to make men and women both wise and prosperous.
In recognition, therefore of his commitment to the worlds of science, business and education and particularly for his contribution to our College, may I invite you Chairman of Council, to induct as an Honorary Fellow of Royal Holloway & Bedford New College Mr Yazan Mufti.

Mr David Sweeney
Vice-Principal, Communications, Enterprise & Research
17 May 2007