Youmna Hashem

CAR Assignment

Prof. Kim Fox

Slug: Since the January 25th revolution, The American University in Cairo has seen a significant decline in its international student community, a rise in the number of Egyptian students, and a serious budget deficit.

Synopsis: Once one of the most sought after study-abroad destinations for international students in the Middle East, AUC’s international student community continues to shrink by the year, whilst the Egyptian student community expands. Due to the increasing socio-political and economic turmoil the country continues to face in this transitional period, AUC is no longer the main educational hub in the Middle East, and the growing Egyptian student community faces the backlash of the loss and subsequent budget deficit.

Pitch: Following the January 25th revolution, hopes for a revived Egypt paving its way to a democratic future ensued. However, the transitional period lasted much longer than many expected and various sectors within the broad Egyptian community faced the backlash – one of which was that of education. According to the AUC Fact Book, the percentage of international students in the university dropped from 10.3% in Fall 2008, to 8% in Fall 2012. The most notable aspect of this decline was the number of American students that decreased. Where they were once 9.7% of the 6000+ student community, as of 2012 they only made up 5.5% of the community.  Attributing their concerns to the unstable state of the country, the US Government issued travel warnings against Egypt and urged its citizens present in the country to leave. American universities in the US with exchange program agreements with the AUC withdrew their agreements and evacuated their students, instead relocating some to Beirut and Jordan.

 Of the 270,000 American students in study abroad programs, only 1.8% choose to go the Middle East. With growing rates of violence, crime and foreigners being targeted, it’s no wonder a large majority of students decided to leave. Not only that, but the fees increase no doubt made the prospect seem uninviting to students who no longer had backing financial power from their universities and government. Interestingly enough, Egypt’s static state benefited the American University in Beirut, whose international student community and neighbouring Arab student community expanded following the 2011 uprising. According to the AUB Fact Book, from the year 2008 to 2011, the number of international students grew significantly, with American students tripling in numbers. Although Lebanon has had its fair share of turmoil and is categorised as being volatile and dangerous, fortunately enough the country went through a relatively calm period, attracting students from all around the world.

 Without a doubt, the decrease in the number of international students took its toll on AUC – but it seemed as though there was a light at the end of the tunnel. The number of Egyptian students enrolled in the university steadily increased each year, making up for the loss of the international students – albeit in numbers, not in profit. Students and their families found themselves facing a startling 29% increase in fees over the course four years. A close look at AUC’s Fact Book reveals, however, that over 50% of Egyptian students enrolled receive some form of financial aid from the university/government. The increase in students enrolled regardless of the state of the economy and the instability could be attributed to a number of things. Following the revolution and the hopes for a new Egypt, a handful of optimists decided to invest in their country – one of those investments being education. Also following the revolution and the decline in international student enrolment, AUC’s entrance requirements lowered. On that note, one must ask if that is what it takes for Egyptians living in their country to obtain “quality education.”

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Interviewees –

Amal Salah – Director of the International Student Affairs

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1) Under what categories do the large majority of American students at AUC fall under? (Transfer, semester abroad, year abroad, full time etc.)

2) What are the transfer/exchange requirements for international students at AUC?

3)    How many American students, if any, *dropped* the semester after having planned on continuing through the Spring 2011 semester? (i.e how many intending to return students did not?)

4) Which US universities, if any, still maintain an exchange program agreement with AUC?

Ghada Hazem – Head of Admissions

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1. What are the entry requirement percentages for incoming freshman undergrads based on each year? (i.e how are they determined?)

2) How are the financial categories defined each year?

3) Is there a quota regarding the number of students expected to enrol each semester?

Additional Source:

El-Bendary, Mohamed. *The Egyptian Revolution: Between Hope and Despair, Mubarak to Morsi*. New York: Algora, 2013. Print.