“Kuwaiti Youth Perspectives on Democracy and Governance”

The lecture held on May 13, 2013, “Kuwaiti Youth Perspectives on Democracy and Governance,” presented findings as part of a ten-month Fulbright research project investigating how Kuwait’s young people perceive their system of governance and the potential role they will play in that system the future.

The research combines qualitative and quantitative functions; the first phase of the project gathered the target population segment, men and women aged 18-35, in small focus groups and one-on-one interviews to assess general attitudes and opinions. Information shared during these meetings, which typically regarded the current political situation in Kuwait and obstacles to national progress, was cross-referenced from group to group to determine overall relevancy to the overarching research goal. This qualitative portion laid the groundwork for the second phase of research incorporating the use of a survey that employed a stratified convenience sampling method. The related lecture focused on the outcome of this quantitative aspect of the project.

In order to ensure a representative survey of the population of Kuwaitis aged 18-35 (approximately 300-350,000), the sample size must be 384 to achieve a confidence level of 95% with a margin of error of ±5%. While the findings presented only a preliminary outcome of 241 respondents to date, the survey continues to be distributed and the final is due to be reached or exceeded by the completion of the grant term in June 2013.

Some results of the survey were expected while others were not. For example, when asked whether they considered Kuwait to be a democracy, more disagreed than agreed. This directly reflected the sentiment expressed in focus group meetings. When asked if Kuwait is on the right or wrong track, 90% answered the former, which also echoes opinions expressed in person. However, there was one particularly unexpected result: When asked how he or she affiliates politically with all of Kuwait’s parliamentary blocs as options, the overwhelming majority consider themselves as none of these, but as “independent”. While the answers to certain questions are expected, the more intriguing element of the results is in determining how each social segment (i.e. bedou, hadar, sunni, shia, male, female, etc.) responded to particular queries. This analysis will be undertaken once the final sample goal is reached.

Overall, Ms. Kadlec’s conclusion was that the sentiment among Kuwaiti youth is a seeming combination of both apathy and frustration with the current system, but also one of confidence that they are capable of changing it.