

Petri meets Omani students visiting UWO

by Alex Hummel - Tuesday, July 03, 2012

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/19745/petri-meets-omani-students-visiting-uwo/>

The sowing of democratic seeds in the politically turbulent “Arab Spring” revolutions is not entirely unlike the process a handful of visionary pioneers followed nearly 240 years ago in the embryonic United States.

That was just one insight long-serving U.S. Rep. Tom Petri, R-Fond du Lac, shared two days away from Independence Day with more than 20 students visiting the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh from Oman’s University of Nizwa.

“They are trying to balance rules with freedom,” Petri said of the challenge pro-democracy activists will continue to face in several Middle Eastern nations.

Petri’s July 2 face-to-face Q&A exchange with the more-than 20 Omani students was another high-impact opportunity for the visiting group to meet with local, state and federal government officials while immersed in summer business courses at UW Oshkosh.

The guest group of students is also visiting New North businesses and industries while enjoying cultural trips to Madison and other sites, meeting leaders and legislators as they get a first-hand introduction to higher education, culture and life in the American Midwest.

On July 2, the students’ questions for Petri – a U.S. history aficionado– centered on and ranged from Americans’ perspectives on the Arab Spring political revolutions occurring in countries throughout the Middle East to the foundations and origins of representative democracy in the United States.

“They weren’t really sure whether to have the office of president even,” Petri said, referring to the Framers’ early debates on leadership. “Should it be hereditary? Should it be elected?... They didn’t even know what they should call (the president). ‘Your Excellency?’ They finally settled on ‘Mr. President.’”

A first group of University of Nizwa students visited UW Oshkosh in the summer of 2011. The “Global Horizons” program was borne out of a long-lasting partnership and friendship that has existed between the two academic communities and schools since the mid-1990s. Into July, the students are taking classes taught by UW Oshkosh College of Business Professor Jeff LaVake.

The partnership truly dates back to UW Oshkosh Chancellor Emeritus John Kerrigan’s mid’ 1990s trips to Oman as an academic consultant on behalf of the U.S. State Department. Kerrigan helped the University of Nizwa’s visionaries and founders develop a higher educational institution that, since 2004, has grown from 1,000 students to more than 8,000.

Petri’s Washington D.C. office will also host this summer’s University of Nizwa delegation later in July as they travel there to tour the nation’s capital.

Learn more:

- [UWO-Nizwa partnership prospers; Omani students arrive for summer program](#)