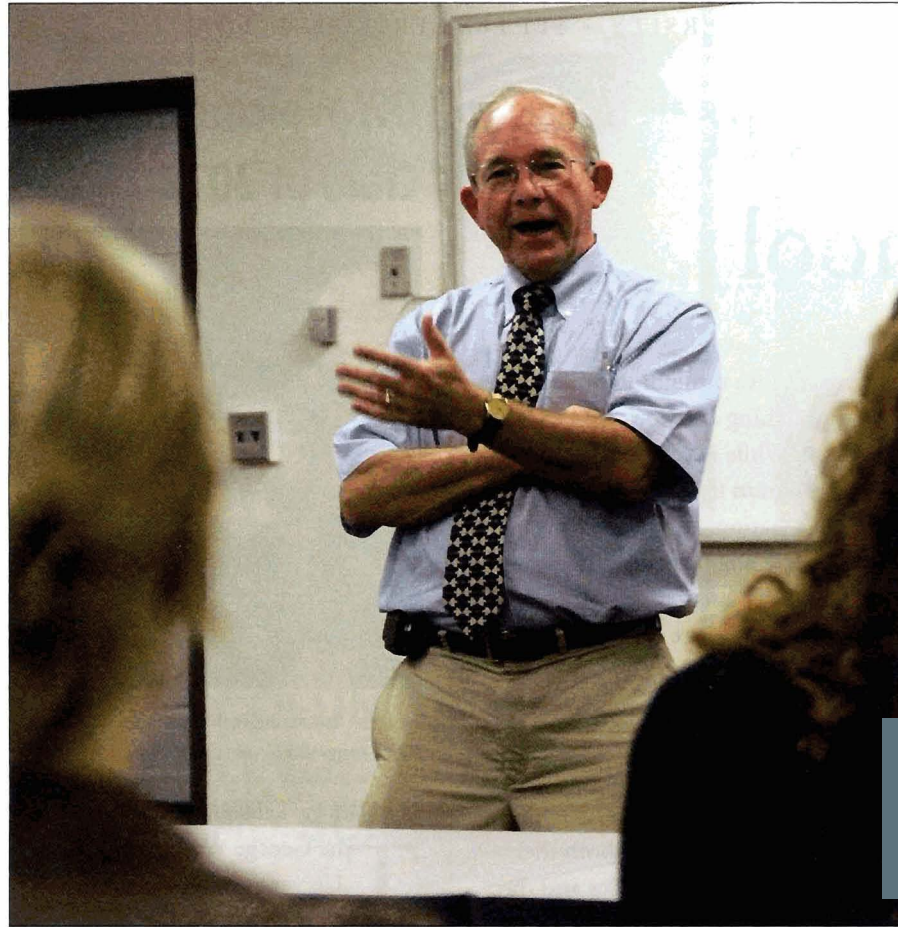


## National Security Internship Incorporates Arabic Language, Culture


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Edward Gnehm, Kuwait Professor of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Affairs, teaches a National Security Internship class.

BY JULIA PARMLEY

**T**wenty-one undergraduate and graduate students spent their summer preparing for a career in national security in an internship that included intensive coursework in Arabic language and culture, the first of its kind in the United States. Held at GW, the nine-week National Security Internship comprised, along with the language and culture training,

classes in homeland security, forensic sciences, intelligence, and cyber terrorism, as well as internships at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the FBI.

The program was a collaboration between Mohssen Esseesy, assistant professor of Arabic and international affairs and coordinator of GW's Arabic program; Tony Sgro, CEO of Edventure Partners, a California-based

company that facilitates partnerships between organizations and educators; and staff of the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI. Esseesy says the federal government is in need of homeland security and intelligence professionals with in-depth knowledge of the Arabic language and culture.

"There is an abundance of high-level expertise in policy, foreign affairs, international terrorism, and intelligence, but what is critically lacking is a new cadre of specialists in those fields with strong language and cultural proficiency and technical know-how," says Esseesy. "This program addresses those needs and, hopefully, in a small way helps to fill that gap."

The 21 students participating in the pilot program were selected from a competitive applicant pool of 100 after a rigorous interview process, which included a statement of purpose, an Arabic language proficiency exam administered by the FBI, a background investigation, a polygraph test, and a drug screening. The program is all-expense paid, and participants received 12 transferable college credits, campus housing, national security clearance, and opportunities for future internships and employment at the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI. GW's Columbian College of Arts and Sciences and the Elliott School of International Affairs helped develop the program curriculum.

A typical day for participants began

with an Arabic class at GW, where students honed their reading, speaking, listening, and writing skills and competence in Arab culture. Students took classes on homeland security and forensics in the early afternoon and ended their day with four- to five-hour on-site internships at the Department of Homeland Security or the FBI. The program also included daylong field trips to sites such as the FBI training center in Quantico, Va., and the National Cryptologic Museum and meetings with government leaders and national intelligence officials.

"We want to provide the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI with culturally competent young people who can speak Arabic and are knowledgeable about Arabic culture," says Sgro.

George Selim, policy adviser for the Department of Homeland Security and program manager, says the internship supports ongoing outreach efforts to different ethnic, religious, and minority groups.

"The vision of the Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff is for young people with critical skills to join public service, and the National Security Internship is the embodiment of that vision," says Selim. "The government is looking for ways to be more inclusive of diversity, language, and cultural competency. This program is a sign of their efforts, and we hope to establish it as one of the premier programs in the country."