KAUST GIFTED STUDENT PROGRAM REPORT
FOUNDATION YEAR 2020-2021

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

جامعة الملك عبدالله للعلوم والتقنية
King Abdullah University of Science and Technology
The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Ranked #1
Among public universities in the number of international students (Open Doors Report, 2020)

Illinois International

Our mission: We will foster an environment of exceptional education and research with global impact, where international perspectives are integral to our institutional culture.

Our vision: Illinois International is at the nexus of all global activities and international studies on the Urbana campus—simultaneously serving as the administrative, programmatic, and strategic unit responsible for many of the international activities Illinois is involved in, both on campus and abroad.

Global Education and Training (GET) welcomed a cohort of KGSP Foundation Year students to Illinois for a 4th consecutive year. UIUC was one of four host institutions selected in 2020-2021 to receive a group of students in the prestigious scholarship program.
KGSP Foundation Year Students

will acquire the skills necessary to prepare competitive college applications and pursue a successful undergraduate education experience at a top U.S. university.

FOUNDATION YEAR COHORT, 2020-2021
17 STUDENTS AT UIUC / 65 TOTAL

King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)

KAUST Gifted Student Program (KGSP)

The KAUST Gifted Student Program (KGSP) was established in 2008, creating a pool of highly-qualified Saudi students within the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math.

As a fully-funded scholarship, the KGSP Program supports the Kingdom’s most talented youth as they earn STEM-based bachelor’s degrees at premier U.S. universities, and in preparation for future graduate studies at KAUST.

Throughout their undergraduate programs, recipients receive unmatched academic, developmental, and pre-professional support.
“Thanks to the strong partnerships between KAUST, IIE, and UIUC, together we succeeded in adapting the Foundation Year program during COVID-19 lockdowns.

The KGSP students sustained their learning and achieved academic success while participating fully online from Saudi Arabia. All students, instructors, advisors, and staff involved in this year’s KGSP program deserve praise for their perseverance and commitment.”

Dr. Matthew Rosenstein, GET Director
Program Objectives

**Assist** students in preparing high-quality college applications essays through combination of coursework & individual advising.

**Create** and support a collaborative environment with IIE advisors as they provide personalized guidance to the students throughout their university application process.

**Foster** development of skills designed to enable a nuanced understanding of the American university system and its learning/teaching methods, while developing a high comfort level in navigating a typical university system and using on-campus resources.

**Enhance** students’ English level proficiency, with emphasis on reading comprehension, writing, note-taking, presentation & STEM communication skills.

**Prepare** students to achieve superior scores in TOEFL and SAT Reasoning and SAT Subject examinations.

**Provide** experiences to prepare students for success in the U.S. undergraduate system.

**Support** students by means of mentorship, academic programming, and community involvement.

**Equip** students with the tools and strategies to address setbacks and challenges academically, culturally, and socially, thereby leading to increased student independence and resiliency.

KGSP Student advice to future Foundation Year students: “You will have a lot of resources and support, make sure to use all of them effectively!”
Program Support

Anna Kasten,
Designated Full-Time Program Coordinator

Oversees and advises KGSP students on academic success, adjustment to online classes, and personal issues (individual and group meetings).

Serves as liaison between students, faculty, and staff at Illinois and KGSP and Institute of International Education (IIE) leadership and advisors.

Communicates with faculty and instructors regularly regarding student progress and KGSP expectations.

Coordinates with Intensive English Institute writing faculty and essay coaches on student college admission essays.

250+ hours of 1:1 advising

Additional Programmatic Support

- Faculty & instructors in: Grainger College of Engineering, Computer Science, Mathematics, & Physics
- The Intensive English Institute
- Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning
- ATLAS - Teaching & Learning with Technology
- International Student and Scholar Services
- Office of Undergraduate Admissions
- Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations
- Dean of Students, Counseling Center, & McKinley Health Center
- Writers Workshop
- Tutor Doctor
Orientation

- Introduction to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- Introduction to Illinois International
- Academic Integrity
- Strategies for Academic Success in Online Learning
- Optimizing Tutoring
- Technology orientation

Fall Curriculum

- Academic English Reading and Essay Writing
- TOEFL and Advanced Academic English
- SAT (Evidence-Based Reading and Writing, Math Reasoning, Subject tests in Math and Physics) - 2 tracks
- Pre-Calculus
- 1-on-1 Essay Coaching

Spring Curriculum

- Academic English for University Success
- Introduction to C++, Excel, and Programming
- Colloquium on American and Academic Culture
- College Physics: Mechanics & Heat (Lecture/Lab/Discussion)
- Calculus
TOEFL Outcomes

Median Improvement TOEFL Score

Start of FY-August 2020
End of FY-Best TOEFL

95
106
**SAT Outcomes**

- **SAT Math Median Improvement:** 40
- **SAT Reading + Writing Median Improvement:** 50
- **Overall SAT Score Median Improvement:** 100
University Placements

KGSP FY Illinois students accepted Fall 2021 admissions offers from:

- College of William and Mary
- Carnegie Mellon University
- Emory University
- Michigan State University
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Berkeley
- University of California, Irvine
- University of California, San Diego
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Colorado Boulder
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- University of Texas at Austin
- University of Wisconsin-Madison
- University of Wisconsin-Madison

7 students from the KGSP FY national cohort will attend the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in Fall 2021.
Workshops & Tutoring

• 350+ hours of 1:1 Essay Coaching
• 700+ hours of Course/Skills Tutoring
• 1-on-1 Coaching/Tutoring for: College Essay Applications, SAT & TOEFL Prep, Pre-Calculus, Calculus, Physics, Academic English
• Organizations providing 1:1 support for our KGSP FY students: Tutor Doctor, Writers Workshop, Advanced Tutoring

KGSP Essay Coaches

As essay coaches, Lisa Chason, Ph.D. and Rob Siedenburg work with the KGSP Foundation Year students as they prepare competitive college applications to top U.S. universities.

What have you learned about Saudi Arabian culture?
Lisa: I’ve enjoyed learning about Saudi culture - just the little glimpses I get from the students’ stories about driving in a car through the desert, large families full of friendly sibling rivalry, learning to cook with one’s mother and grandmother, wise sayings a father shares, love for the Arabic language. And also examples that transcend cultural differences.

Rob: These are very bright young people, with their eyes fixed on a bright future, dreaming creatively but practically of helping to meet Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030—and working hard to be part of the solution, rather than the problem, in their rapidly developing nation.

What do you enjoy most about working with the students?
Rob: These are very bright young people, with their eyes fixed on a bright future, dreaming creatively but practically of helping to meet Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030—and working hard to be part of the solution, rather than the problem, in their rapidly developing nation.
Summer Courses

2020

Ready, Set, Undergrad (online course)
- Developed in partnership with GET, IEI, IIE, and KAUST
- Piloted as KGSP Summer Enrichment Course for 23 students

Student feedback
"I honestly loved everything about it. It wasn’t stressful, and the environment was open and friendly. Kristin is very helpful and welcoming, and I will miss it. I also liked the fact that we were able to contribute through the breakout rooms and just being able to get involved."

2021

- Extension of FY academic year program
- 18 hours/week (on-campus in Champaign-Urbana)
  (1) University of Illinois STEM course (for credit)
    Ready, Set, Undergrad course (in-person)

- Offers KGSP students residential experience
  Learning about campus life before undergraduate programs start

- Discussion sessions for each course