أكاديمية كاوست
KAUST ACADEMY

برنامج جامعة الملك عبدالله
للعلوم والتقنية للطلبة الموهوبين
KAUST GIFTED
STUDENT PROGRAM

KAUST Gifted Student Program

↘ ANNUAL REPORT



2025

جامعة الملك عبدالله
للعلوم والتقنية
King Abdullah University of
Science and Technology

KAUST
Gifted Student Program

Sitting under KAUST Academy and implemented in partnership with the Institute of International Education (IIE), the KAUST Gifted Student Program (KGSP) is designed to foster a pool of Saudi Arabian scholars within the scientific and technological fields. The KGSP prepares Saudi Arabia's next generation of thought leaders, scientists and innovators to recognize, leverage and shape the unprecedented opportunities of the 21st century.

Whether they choose future academic, scientific, professional or entrepreneurial pursuits, the KGSP ensures students have the global mindsets, holistic skills and significant credentials to tackle the Nation's and humanity's greatest challenges.

As a crucial knowledge pipeline supporting a thriving Saudi Arabia, KGSP alumni contribute to the nation's transformation in innovative ways that only a KAUST experience can provide.

"The KGSP and the entire KAUST community have given us wings to soar beyond the boundaries of what we thought possible."
- Arwa Karim, UC-Berkeley Senior



375
Student enrollment in AY 2024-25

47
Global university hosts

600+
KGSP alumni graduated from top global B.S. programs

34%
Historic female representation in Program

3.55
Median cumulative GPA of KGSP undergraduate students

As the KGSP continues to evolve, it does so in strategic alignment with KAUST. Stemming from the Program's comparative advantages for talent development as identified by its Technical Review Committee report delivered in 2023, the KGSP's strategic objectives for the 2024-25 academic year were to accelerate impact through:

- **University Placement** — Providing every student with the optimal academic opportunity to excel at top global STEM universities.
- **Tailored Student Support** — Identifying the unique needs and goals of every student and partnering together on a path to success.
- **Professional Development** — Creating opportunities outside of the classroom to develop the holistic skills and experiences necessary for careers of impact.
- **KAUST Engagement** — Leveraging relationships with KAUST faculty and partners to provide students with access to unique experiences, mentors, and resources, grounded in KAUST's relationship with the Kingdom's RDI goals.
- **Alumni Network** — Building connections between alumni and with current students to strengthen community, create opportunities to give back, and amplify inspiring stories of impact.



Dr. Sultan Albarakati

Associate Vice President, Saudi Talent Development
King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST)

The KAUST Gifted Student Program (KGSP), launched in 2008, is one of KAUST's most enduring commitments to the Kingdom's future. Serving as KAUST's de facto undergraduate program, it has enabled hundreds of top Saudi students to study at leading global STEM institutions before returning for graduate study and careers of national impact. Now in its seventeenth year, the Program has produced nearly 500 graduate returnees, six Rhodes Scholars, eight additional Finalists, seven Ibn Rushd postdoctoral fellows, and an alumni network spanning over 150 employers across the Kingdom.

Aligned with KAUST's Accelerating Impact strategy, the KGSP has expanded its mission beyond graduate preparation to strengthening national transformation across critical sectors. A 2023 Technical Review identified five competitive advantages: world-class university placements, tailored student support, enriching professional development, deep KAUST engagement, and a dynamic alumni network.

In 2024, the KGSP joined KAUST Academy, creating new pathways for collaboration and scale. This summer, 30 students joined Academy programs in Italy, Canada, the UK, and KAUST, and the Academy launched the Science, Technology, and Entrepreneurship Programs (STEPs) to extend access to top universities to a broader pool of Saudi students.
The Program's impact was underscored at the 2024 Chicago Convocation, where HRH Princess Reema bint Bandar Al Saud praised KGSP alumni for contributions ranging from renewable energy to AI.

Looking ahead, the KGSP will remain a cornerstone of KAUST's mission nurturing talent, advancing discovery, and accelerating national transformation.





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University
Placement

The KGSP strives to provide all students with optimal academic opportunities, preparing students to secure admission to and excel at some of the world's top undergraduate STEM universities. To support this goal, the Program provides college admissions counseling and advising designed to improve the quality of applicant profiles and application materials, and advocates for KGSP applicants with university partners.



100%
Students supported by the KGSP who received at least one full admission to a top global university

69
Students starting undergraduate programs at top universities in 2025

42%
Overall KGSP admission rate on applications submitted to top global universities

79%
Students placed at universities on the Ministry of Education's Arruaad Top 30 global universities list

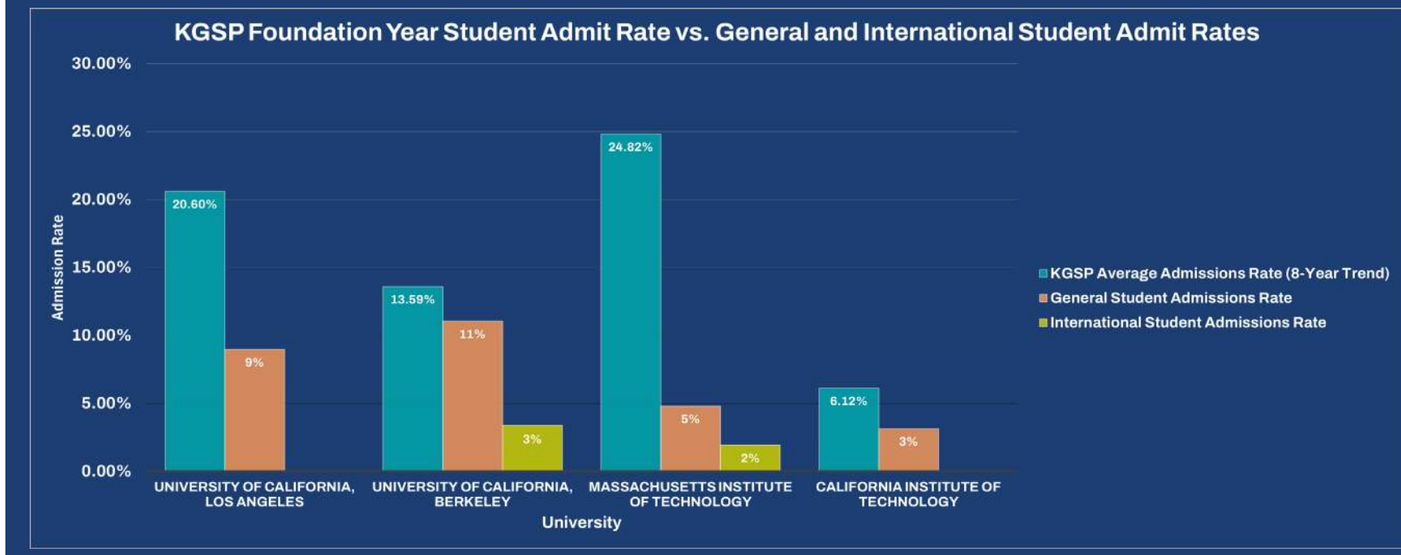
97%
Students who report that KGSP prepared them for undergraduate success

100%
Students who report KGSP enhanced their university application preparation

2025-26 Universities Across the United States

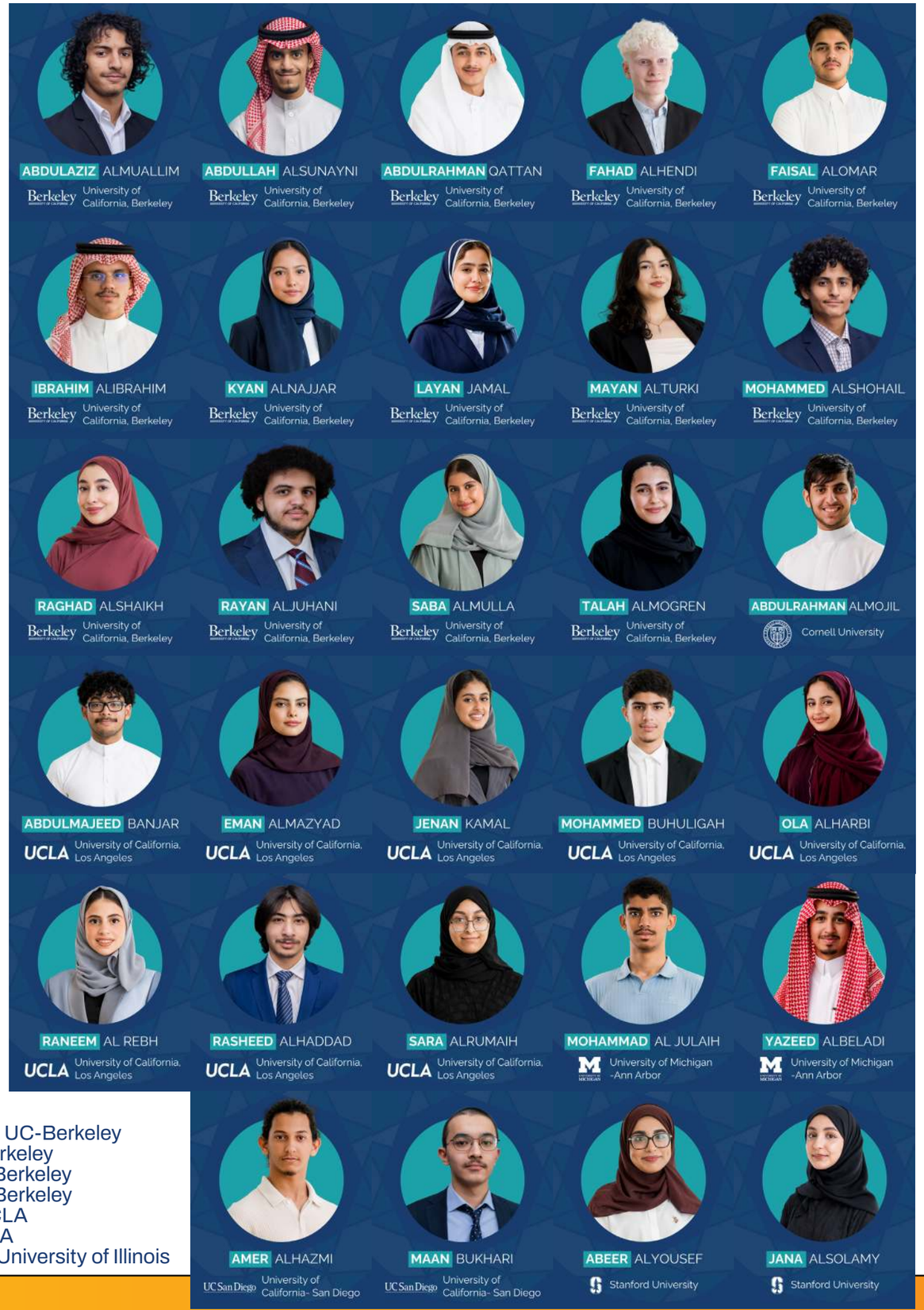


> ***"[KGSP] gave me the chance to aim even higher and grow in ways I hadn't expected. Alhamdulillah, my efforts paid off and I was accepted into one of my dream universities – UC Berkeley."***
> *- Abdullah Alsunayni, Incoming UC-Berkeley Freshman*



KGSP Freshman Class Universities





Not Pictured:

- Areej Alqarni, Columbia University
- Imen Alkuraya, Columbia University
- Jumanah Manzary, Harvard University
- Adeeb Alshehry, MIT
- Wesam Al Qanbar, MIT
- Faris Alghamdi, Stanford University
- Abdullah Alabdullah, UC-Berkeley
- Rand Aodah, UC-Berkeley
- Rawan Sonbul, UC-Berkeley
- Saleh Alangari, UC-Berkeley
- Almas Alghamdi, UCLA
- Nawal Altoukhi, UCLA
- Faisal Almugaiteeb, University of Illinois

1:35
KGSP's Advisor to Student Ratio

49
In-Person Campus Site Visits by KGSP Advisors

67
Seniors Graduating in 2025

86%
Students Who Felt That Their KGSP Advisor Supported Them This Year

92%
Students Satisfied by Their KGSP Experience This Year

3.53
Mean GPA Among Graduating Seniors



Connecting with students in person is a highlight of KGSP's advising model. Advisors prioritize creating meaningful connections to peers and resources on campus by hosting in-person meetings, informational sessions, and social activities.



Tailored
Student Support

The KGSP utilizes a relational and proactive advising model, prioritizing the development of deep relationships between students and Advisors to tailor support to individual goals and needs and provide frequent touchpoints to encourage accountability and mentorship. This encourages clear communication and transparency, and provides students with the resources needed to make informed decisions about their academic and professional paths.

A personalized approach.

While the close relationships developed between students and Advisors are the cornerstone of KGSP's tailored student support, the Program also provides individual professional enrichment advising, alumni and peer mentorship, tutoring support, virtual webinars and workshops, and regular enrichment and advising newsletters that provide important updates, upcoming deadlines or opportunities, student support recommendations, and student and staff spotlights.

"Getting to know students on a personal level fosters trust, making it easier for us to reach out to our advisors, especially during difficult times when it can feel intimidating to open up about academic struggles."

~ KGSP Student reflecting on the value of Advising Site Visits



Advising Success Stories

*“**I fully immersed myself in tutoring** after my advisor suggested it could help **me get a better grasp of the harder topics, especially in Calculus.** Tutoring gave me more confidence during exams **and helped me manage my time better.** I’d recommend it to any KGSP student **who wants to stay ahead.**”*

~ Hussain Al Shihab



Hussain Al Shihab

North Carolina State University
Foundation Year

Hussain has always been a strong student, but the pace of classes at university can be surprising. Seeking help to prepare for an imminent calculus exam, Hussain took advantage of KGSP support for tutoring and learned a new method that unlocked his understanding of how to approach the concepts and solve problems successfully. This experience changed his perspective on asking for support from his Advisor to overcome challenges and gives him greater confidence for navigating his undergraduate career at the University of Illinois.

Ahmed Fadhlallah

North Carolina State University
Foundation Year

Prior to joining the KGSP, Ahmed already had a strong academic background and many achievements, but he showed a strong desire for continuous improvement to “fill the gaps” wherever needed so that he could be the strongest possible candidate for top universities. As Ahmed worked with his Advisor on pursuit of his goals, he shared what he learned with his peers to further their successes as well, and is looking forward to starting his undergraduate degree at MIT this fall.



Dana Hejazi

University of California, Berkeley
Senior

From the beginning of her undergraduate journey at UC-Berkeley, Dana knew she was pursuing a unique path as KGSP’s first Nuclear Engineering major. Partnering with her Advisor, Dana worked hard and developed resilience in the face of adversity, leading to great academic success and opportunities to complete cutting-edge research at UC-Berkeley culminating in becoming first author on a publication about the potential of nuclear energy in Saudi Arabia. Dana has grown into a researcher and leader capable of tremendous impact.



“Supporting Dana and witnessing her development over the last three years has been one of my highlights as an Advisor and I am excited to see the impact she will have at KAUST and in the Kingdom.”

~ Leah Jeedas, KGSP Student Advisor

*“**My KGSP Student Advisor consistently went beyond offering guidance. He was approachable, responsive, and** played a key role in keeping us motivated **throughout the demanding application process.**”*

~ Ahmed Fadhlallah

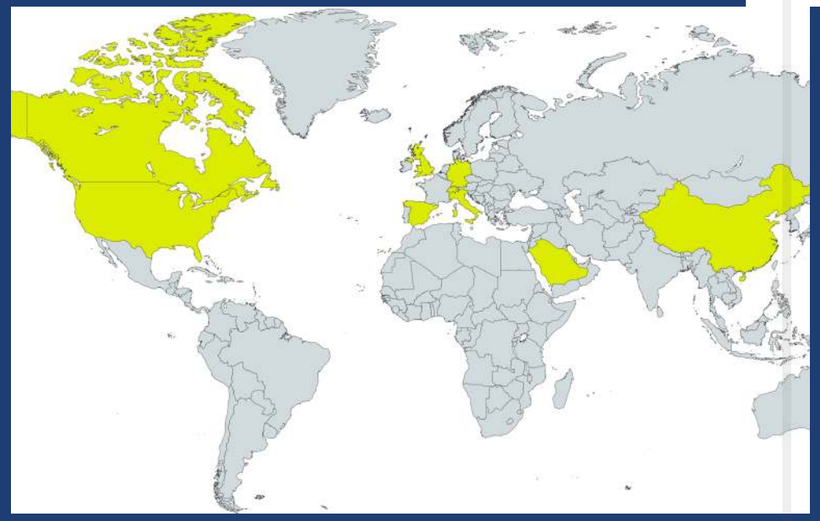
Professional Development

The KGSP creates enriching opportunities outside of the classroom for students to develop the skills and experiences necessary for careers of impact. Leveraging relationships with companies and research institutions around the world, the KGSP supports high-value student internships in industry and university campuses that allow students to apply academic knowledge in professional settings.

In 2025, Students Completed Summer Enrichment in 10 Countries

"This experience [at Carnegie Mellon RISS] gave me a clearer understanding of graduate research and its value and equipped me with the confidence and skills to pursue my Master's at KAUST."

-Sohaib Bantan,
University of Minnesota Sophomore







47
Industry Internships

30
Students in KAUST Academy Summer Specialization Programs

85
Host Organizations & Partners

135
Research Placements

48
Students in the KAUST Summer Insternship Program

95%
Students Complete Enrichment





Through specialized webinars and tailored one-on-one advising, the KGSP helps students create professional development plans and pursue summer enrichment opportunities at partner organizations, home universities, or competitive internship and fellowship programs. Throughout the year, the KGSP facilitates meaningful peer-to-peer engagement and professional network building through enrichment fairs, specialized sessions with campus career centers, and KGSP alumni mentoring and career showcases.

- **80%** of students find the KGSP Enrichment Digest a valuable resource for finding summer enrichment opportunities.
- **70% - 90%** of students feel confident to prepare a resume, interview for positions, request recommendation letters, and write a statement of purpose for enrichment activities.

Professional Development
Accelerating RDI Priorities

Health & Well-Being

Ghaida Aldhahri, Junior at Boston University
Summer Enrichment: CERN, Geneva, Switzerland



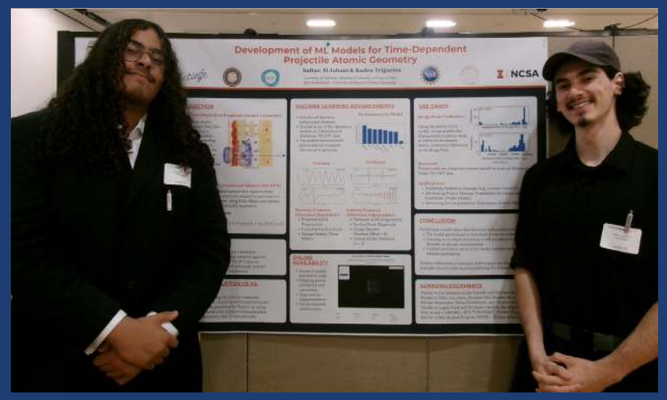
“The experience was nothing short of extraordinary. Being part of a globally renowned research institution allowed me to proudly represent both KGSP and KAUST, and I was glad to see how well they were known at CERN. The opportunity showed me how adaptable and transferable the skills supported by KGSP truly are. I gained new computational abilities, honed cross-cultural communication in a diverse environment, and expanded my skills in presenting, attending research talks, and networking. These experiences have given me both confidence and tools that will carry forward into my academic and professional journey.

I witnessed how fundamental research in particle physics translates into tangible medical technologies. For example, I learned about proton therapy projects that CERN is collaborating on with hospitals to advance cancer treatment, some of which is already in use in Saudi Arabia. These applications connect directly to my major in biomedical engineering.”

Energy & Industrial Leadership

Sultan Al Juhani, Freshman at UC-Berkeley
Summer Enrichment: FODDOMAT REU at University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

“Over the summer, I discovered how capable I can be in finding real solutions to real problems. This experience has deeply enriched my time with KGSP and has given me a much clearer picture of what professional development means for me, as well as what I want to achieve both academically and professionally.



My research focused on predicting the stopping power of projectile protons in materials, particularly aluminum. This work has clear applications in improving predictions of proton radiation damage in materials used in nuclear reactors, for example.”

Sustainable Environment & Essential Needs



Leena Al Shammasi, Sophomore at UCLA
Summer Enrichment: Liu Group, Harvard University

“My research experience at Harvard has exposed me to the daily tasks of a full-time researcher and has given me the opportunity to explore a growing field: electrochemical engineering. I’m confident that the KGSP has been one of the main drivers of success in my Harvard research experience, [which] aims to find efficient, environmentally-friendly methods to synthesize organic molecules using electrochemistry. Our research is still in the works, but I believe our methodology and approach can have a considerable impact in the field.”

Economies of the Future

Hashim Motabagani, Sophomore at Penn State
Summer Enrichment: Robotics Institute Summer Scholars (RISS) Program, Carnegie Mellon University



“This experience has widened my perspective of my major. In addition, this experience has put my adaptability to the test where I needed to learn many skills I didn’t acquire before in my studies. Soft robots are emerging as an essential part of robotics development. Simulation is one of the first steps in making sure those new robots are interacting with us and their environments safely and is important for the cities and economies of the future.”

362
Students Attending 2025 KGSP Convocation

48
Students Conducting Summer Research Internships with 30 KAUST Faculty

63
Students Attending 2025 Pre-Departure Orientation on KAUST Campus

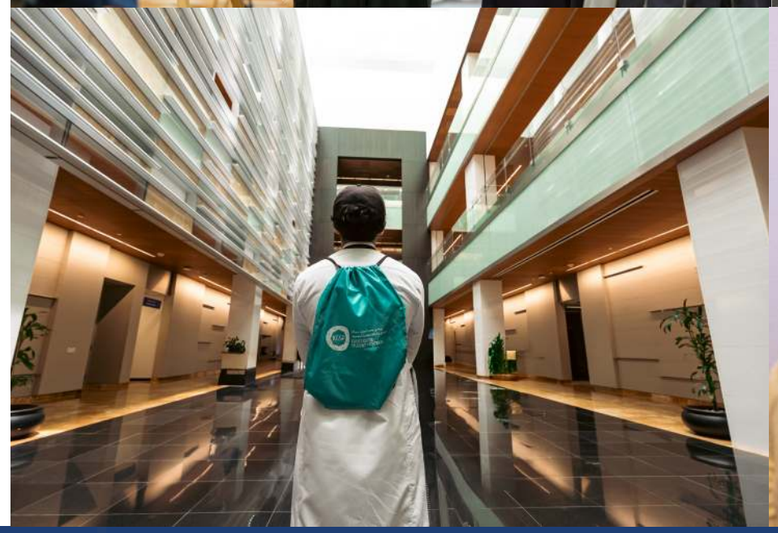
30
Students Participating in KAUST Academy Global Summer Programs

52
Students Anticipated to Join KAUST Graduate Programs in Fall 2025

107
Students Receiving Mentorship from KAUST Community Members









KAUST
Engagement

KGSP students benefit from affiliation with their host institution in the United States as well as their home institution of KAUST. The Program provides opportunities for engagement with KAUST faculty, partners, and other resources grounded in KAUST's contributions to the Kingdom's Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) goals.

Ensuring that KGSP students are familiar with KAUST's academic programs, research impact, and commercial and government partnerships is essential for exciting students about the opportunities that await their return home for graduate study.

"KGSP is about more than just academics; it is about the people—the faculty and alumni who offer advice, the advisors who go above and beyond, and the students who create a network that spans across time zones and borders. It is a community that supports you when your plans crumble, when unexpected disasters strike, and when the weight of being far from home becomes too heavy to carry alone."

-Juri Alhuthali, UCLA Senior,
KGSP Convocation Welcome Address

This year, the program significantly increased in-person interaction with KAUST:

- 33 (+15) KGSP alumni supported program events – an 83% increase
- 62 (+35) KGSP students conducted summer enrichment at KAUST – an 129% increase
- 34 Cohort 16 Foundation Year students joined their Cohort 17 peers for the Pre-Departure Orientation at KAUST
- 8 members of KAUST senior leadership attended Convocation
- 5 U.S. host universities received visits from KAUST Academy leadership

KGSP Convocation in Chicago

The annual KGSP Convocation serves as a cornerstone for student engagement with KAUST, bringing together the entire KGSP student body and KAUST faculty, representatives of the KGSP alumni network, and senior university leadership for an academic symposium. This year's Convocation, held February 14-16 in Chicago, cultivated a strong academic community anchored to KAUST and connected to the latest developments in the Kingdom.

The KGSP was honored to welcome to Convocation distinguished leaders from across Saudi Arabia, representing university leadership, government, and the private sector.







The Convocation agenda was designed to familiarize students with KAUST through interaction with faculty and alumni, while also providing the support to accelerate student impact on the Kingdom's national economy.



"Just as we first met at KAUST and stood in front of the beacon of peace, hope, and reconciliation, today we meet in Chicago, a city that represents resilience, reinvention, and boundless ambition. Both places, in their own ways, inspire us to look beyond ourselves—whether in reflection or aspiration—serving not just their own communities, but the entire world."

- Ghaida Aldhahri, Boston University Junior

"Meeting students for short conversations and seeing their engagement and enthusiasm was the most impactful aspect of Convocation."

- KAUST Faculty







KGSP

Alumni Network

The KGSP alumni community is the realization of the investment that KAUST makes in the students of the KGSP. Each year, the community of KGSP alumni grows with the graduation of current students. As the community expands, examples of the impact the KGSP has on KAUST and the Kingdom become more apparent. Alumni of the KGSP walk a wide range of paths, from cutting-edge researchers and engineers at the Kingdom's giga projects to start-up founders, CEOs, Rhodes Scholars, and KAUST professors. As the community continues to grow, so too will the impact of the KGSP's alumni on KAUST and the Kingdom.

600+
KGSP Alumni

200+
Alumni who gave back to the KGSP

150+
Unique Alumni Employers

140+
Alumni currently enrolled in KAUST graduate programs



Giving Back

KGSP alumni work hard to strengthen their connection with the current student population through participation in numerous activities:

- KGSP Events
- Alumni Ambassadors
- Alumni Career Talks



Community Services

The KGSP works to provide robust services to the alumni community though various initiatives:

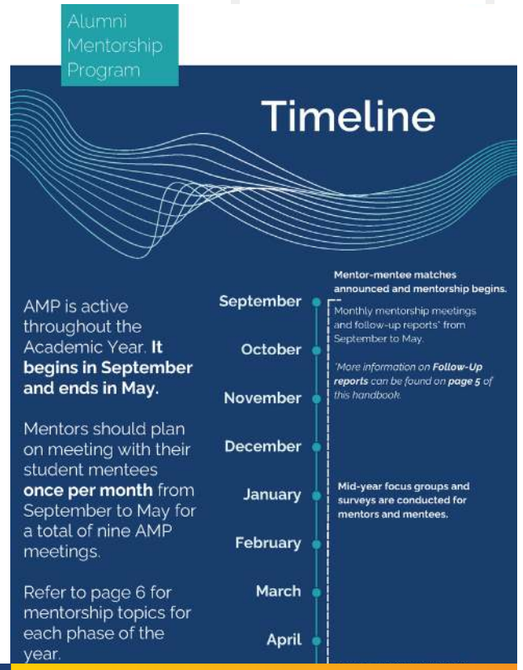
- KGSP Alumni Council
- Upcoming Inaugural Alumni Summit in Fall 2025
- Alumni Dinners
- KGSP Alumni Podcast



Alumni Mentorship Program

The KGSP Alumni Mentorship Program (AMP) provides mentorship for current KGSP undergraduate students by matching them with KGSP alumni mentors for an entire academic year. Mentors and students meet monthly to discuss academic pursuits, career goals, personal milestones, and other matters related to a successful scholarship experience.



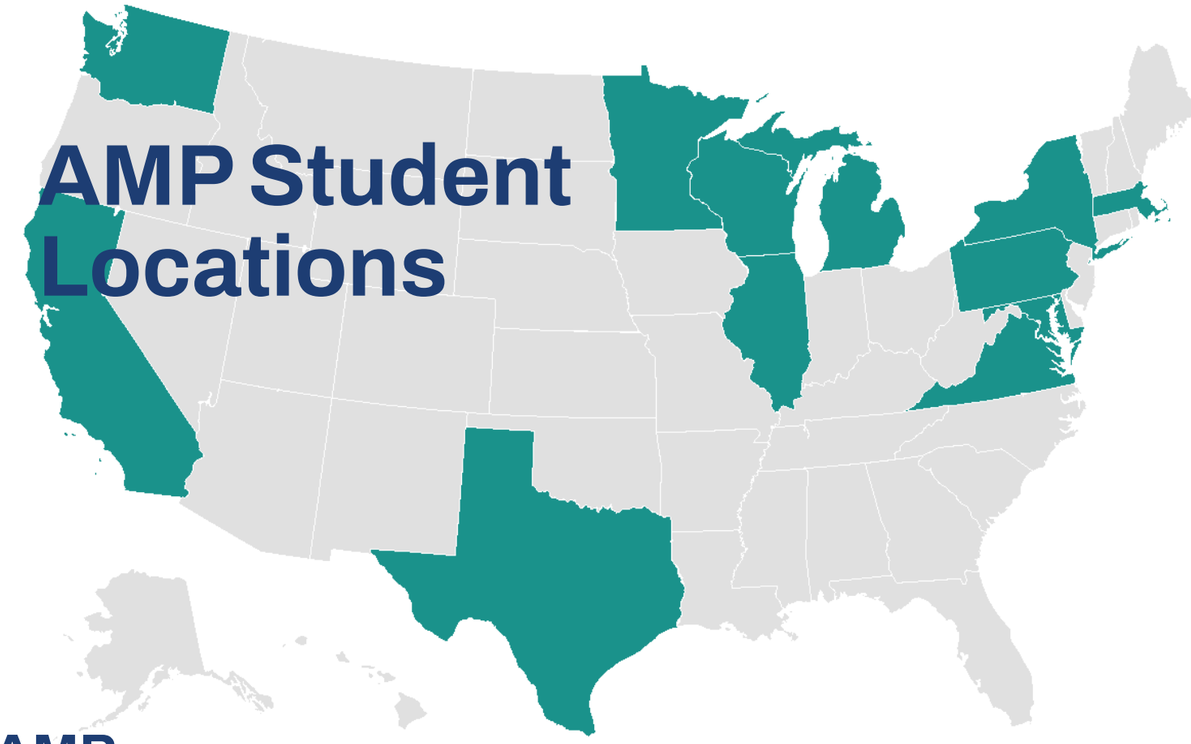


Objectives

- Facilitate meaningful connections
- Enhance academic and career success
- Foster a strong alumni-student network



AMP Student Locations



AMP Outcomes

- 100% of students surveyed reported their alumni mentor participated actively in mentorship.
- Mentors and mentees often connect with their shared experiences and build strong, personal relationships.
- 93% of students surveyed reported that they were overall satisfied with their mentoring experience.
- The students value connecting with a graduate from the same scholarship program for networking and advice.
- Several students expressed an interest in becoming mentors themselves in the future.

> *"Having access to one person who had more experience than myself about the opportunities provided for us changed my life to where I am now. Ever Since I realized the impact access to information and mentorship has on a student's life, I vowed to always lend a helping hand in mentoring the future generations of scientists and leaders."*



Murtadha Al Malallah
AMP Alumni Mentor

Congratulations KGSP Undergraduate Class of 2025!

Boston University
Lamar Mohammed A ALSUBHI
Sadiq Mustafa N AL HUMOOD

Carnegie Mellon University
Majd Ahmed S ALMUDHRY
Mohammed Ali M ALFARAJ

Columbia University
Raghad Ali N ALSALMAN
Jude Tareef Y ALAAMA
Huda Abdulrahman A MARTA

Georgia Institute of Technology
Suhaib Marwan M DASHASH
Hamzah Abdulkhaliq J ALSALMAN
Abdullah Mohammed N ALJASSER

Harvard University
Ibrahim Fowzan S ALKURAYA

Johns Hopkins University
Jana Ameed N ALMADANI

Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Khalid Hamad A AJRAN

Michigan State University
Qasem Abdulaziz S ALOBAYDAN
Ahmed Nizar M ALSAEGH

New York University
Muhannad Dhaifallh M ALZAEDI



Northwestern University
Khalid Wabil A SIRAJ

Pennsylvania State University
Mohammed Essam M ALSENANI
Mohammed Bassim M AL KHAZAL
Ahmed Khalid A HABIB

Purdue University
Muhannad Radaan O AL GARNI
Mustafa Mohammed M ALBAHRANI
Salma Fadhel A ALROWAIE
Komail Mohammed S ALALI

Rice University
Abduallah Mohammad A ALSINAN

Stanford University
Raghad Mohammed M ASIRI

Texas A&M University
Tamara Hussam A BASFAR

University of California, Berkeley
Arwa Abdulrahman M KARIM
Dana Majed M HEJAZI
Suliman Abdullah S ALHARBI

University of California, Irvine
Faisal Khaled F ALSHAIDDI
Abdullah Khaleel M ALHUSSAIN

University of California, Los Angeles
Juri Ahmed H ALHUTHALI
Mohammed Nizar H ALJANOUBI
Zahra Abdullah A ALSADEG
Feras Faisal M HABIBULLAH
Ammar Hani A ALMARZOOQ
Hassan Hani M ALRUMAIH

University of California, San Diego
Shahad Munther A ABDULOMHSSEN
Mohammad Redha A ALKHALIFAH
Meshal Soleman A ALRWAISHED
Faris Abdulrahman M ALKHALIFAH

University of Chicago
Jumanah Said S ALMALKI

University of Colorado, Boulder
Batool Fathi H HANI
Yousef Abdulhameed Y ALMOHSEN

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Fahad Mohammed A ALSAAB
Ahmed Majed A FELEMBAN
Abdullah Ahmed H ALSUFYANI
Naif Turki N ALOTAIBI
Fatimah Moheealdeen J ALHAWAJ

University of Maryland, College Park
Hamad Ibrahim H ALRASHID

University of Massachusetts, Amherst
Zainab Zaki M AL NAMER

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
Osama Hisham S AZHAR
Mohammed Abbas AJABNOOR

University of Rochester
Adel Raafat A FADHUL

University of Texas, Austin
Raed Mohammed A ALBOGAMI
Mohammed Hasan A ALAMOUDI
Abdulrahman Mohammed A ALSHAHRANI

University of Virginia
Ali Abdulaziz A BOHLIGA
Abdullah Mohammed S HEJAZI
Hassan M H AL MOALIM
Mohammed Asaad A ALWOSAIBI

University of Wisconsin, Madison
Mohammed Khalid M ALKHUDHAYRI
Abdulrhman Ahmed A HAKEEM
Abdulrahman Assem A ALMANEA
Maryam Hussain A AL JAWAD

Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Shahad Saud A ALFARAJ

> ***"I am filled with gratitude as I look back on my experience with KGSP, and I would like to thank every single person who has contributed to my happiness and success along this journey. Let us take a moment to celebrate this milestone and cherish the memories, friendships, and the invaluable KAUST connection that will forever illuminate our paths ahead."***
>
> *- Salma Alrowaie,*
> *Purdue University Senior*





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