

EYE ON DUBAI



ILLUSTRATION BY CRISTINA WENCIA | THE STATE NEWS

MSU continues commitment to Middle East as area's economy suffers

By Jacob Carpenter and Justin Harris
THE STATE NEWS

Halfway around the world, in a country roughly the size of Michigan, the school year is wrapping up for about 50 MSU students. They are the inaugural class at MSU Dubai, the university's newest campus, located in the Middle East. MSU has joined several leading American universities in moving to the Middle East, a migration that some have called an "educational gold rush" to one of the world's largest emerging markets.

Last August, MSU became the first public American university to open a campus in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, a commercial and industrial utopia carved out of the desert. Yet with the economic collapse — the credit crunch, in particular — the once-booming Dubai has grinded to a halt. Endless construction, terrible traffic and cramped malls have been replaced by abandoned projects, vacant streets and unpopulated commercial centers. News reports say the population, made up of 80 to 90 percent foreigners, is fleeing the blight of Dubai by an estimated 1,000 people per day. Its effect on MSU Dubai cannot yet be determined, university officials say, but the campus' future has somewhat darkened in what was once the brightest economic beacon of the Middle East.

Heading East
Twelve years ago, university officials including then-President M. Peter McPherson and then-Provost Lou Anna K. Simon sat down to discuss MSU's lack of presence in the Middle East. They decided the university would pursue an educational program in the Middle East but agreed that any endeavor there would require cooperation from a host country. University officials set out several provisions that would need to be met — MSU would have complete control over admissions, faculty, curriculum and degree requirements; methods of teaching could not be challenged; research and outreach opportunities must be present; and the host

See DUBAI on page 2A

Details on Dubai's MSU

MSU Dubai offers six undergraduate major programs — business administration, child and youth development, computer engineering, construction project management, early childhood education and media management and research.
The university offers four post-graduate degree programs and will add three more in the 2009-10 academic year.
Classes have an average of 10 students and are taught in English.
The majority of the campus' roughly 20 faculty members have taught at MSU's campus in East Lansing.
The campus is part of the Dubai International Academic City, home to more than 30 universities from around the world.
While MSU is the only public U.S.-based university in Dubai, neighboring Qatar features campuses set up by Cornell, Carnegie Mellon, Northwestern, Texas A&M and Virginia Commonwealth universities.

SOURCE: DUBAI INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CITY; MSU DUBAI, ROBERT VON BERNUTH, AN MSU INSTRUCTOR IN DUBAI



ANDREA ZAGATA | 5N

To read a full version of this story, please visit statenews.com.