

Kuwait University Students Design Future Workspace

Students explored and redesigned a piece of architectural modern heritage, Sheikh Fahad Al-Salem's Al-Nuwiseeb palace.

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Kuwait University students recently reimagined a piece of architectural history as a modern-day tourism company while participating in a unique design project. It merged hands-on learning with expert guidance to provide students with valuable experience. Together with Steelcase, the Interior Architecture design studio course at Kuwait University worked on the reuse project of Sheikh Fahad Al-Salem AlSabah's Al-Nuwiseeb palace. Dr. Lamis Behbehani from Kuwait University, and Hesham Lotfy and Angelique Cecchini from Steelcase led the collaboration.

Al-Nuwiseeb palace is situated on the coast of Al-Nuwiseeb area in Kuwait near the Kuwait-Saudi Arabia border. The palace was initially built as a residential site for family use. Currently, the site is abandoned and in threat of demolition.

The palace before and an example of after design by student Dalal AlKhalaf.

“With the decrease of architectural heritage in Kuwait, the objective of the collaboration was to enable the students, the new generation of Kuwaiti residents and nationals, to explore and redesign a significant piece of Kuwait's architectural modern heritage, with the support and guidance from Steelcase,” explains Dr. Lamis Behbehani, assistant professor at the KU College of Architecture's Interior Architecture program.

Through a series of virtual lectures by Steelcase and the Kuwait University in-house design team, students identified furniture and other design elements suitable for both contemporary-current use and the site's heritage. To enable the students to learn from specialized sources, virtual lectures included Steelcase team members from global locations such as Dubai and Germany, covering topics such as sustainable design and hybrid work environments.

“The students were very engaged during the visit to the dealer's space in Kuwait where they learned about Steelcase' workplace approach. They were highly motivated after the different sessions we delivered, and they managed to translate these concepts into great ideas in their projects' presentations. It was a great experience to work with these amazing talents,” says Hesham Lotfy, Steelcase Project and Business Manager. As a result, students produced 21 design proposals showing inspiring office environments.

“The design proposals integrated wellbeing features and tools for healthy active work environments into this significant Kuwaiti modern period building,” says Dr. Behbehani.

“The collaboration was a productive learning experience and a challenge to undertake due to the ongoing pandemic. The adjustable and mobile design characteristics of Steelcase’s furniture enabled the students to easily propose interior and exterior workspaces for different work modes.”

DR LAMIS BEHBEHANI | Assistant professor at the KU College of Architecture’s Interior Architecture program.

Kuwait University Students during their visit to Steelcase dealer’s space in Kuwait

Proposed design by student Raghad AlMulla

Proposed design by student Raghad AlMulla

One of the students says her concept was inspired after visiting the site and seeing the palace situated in a remote location. A survey led to an idea she called the “Wholeness Tourism Company.”

“My design focused on the way people would be more active and interact with others in the building. At the same time, I wanted to preserve the palace and make it comfortable enough for people to want to work there daily. “I provided spaces that serve the physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing of the workers and visitors. My design also accommodated for nomadic, resident, personal, social, learning and meeting zones. In addition, I included specific furniture pieces for the outdoor and indoor areas.” says student Raghad AlMulla.

Proposed design by students Ayah Qumber and Nourhan Hassan

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“Steelcase put emphasis on three elements; ergonomics, sustainability, and inclusivity, which played a vital role in the way we set up the office plan. It was a great project to work on and it made us develop a much better understanding of what it means to design for everyone.”

AYAH QUMBER AND NOURHAN HASSAN | Student

Students reported enjoying the project and say the instructor and Steelcase helped them develop their projects and ideas. “The location of Al Nuwaiseeb Palace was interesting from a historical point of view with the location being far from the crowds of the city.”

“Collaborating with Steelcase gave us the opportunity to better understand the office environment needs and develop our projects with a focus on the furniture and products used.”

DALAL ALKHALAF | Student

Proposed exterior by students Gana AlRefaei and Ghala AlAwwad

Proposed design by students Gana AlRefaei and Ghala AlAwwad

“I was so fortunate to be part of this project, it has been amazing to see how students embraced what they learned and implanted into the space. We received a lot of wonderful concepts from very talented students,” says Angelique Cecchini, Steelcase Learning strategic account manager.