Launch Event, April, 2009
Dubai, UAE

Remarks from Blair Sheppard

BLAIR SHEPPARD:

On behalf of Duke University and its President Richard Brodhead, I’d like to welcome His Highness Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai – Your Highness, thank you for your strong support of our international expansion plans.

I also want to offer my thanks to the Dubai International Finance Center and the Mohammad Bin Rashid Program for Leadership Development, who have been tremendous partners in our planning process and have been instrumental in realizing a permanent presence in Dubai for Duke.

I must also acknowledge our regional team here in Dubai for their many hours of hard work not only in organizing today’s events, but also in playing an integral role in bringing our global expansion plans to life.

And with those acknowledgements, I wish you good day!

I use those words not only as a greeting, but as a genuine description of this very important and historic moment for Duke University and The Fuqua School of Business – it is indeed a good day for us.

All of us know we are living in a world that is vastly different than it was when we announced our global plans last September – and we can probably assume it will be a vastly different world six months from now.

National economies are in turmoil, jobs are hard to keep and even harder to find – which may make some wonder why we are forging ahead with plans to deliver The Duke MBA and other Duke programs around the world.

In truth, global economic conditions are a primary driving force behind our expansion.
We believe that our ambitious goal to offer the Duke experience in the world’s most important economic regions is part of the solution to the world’s financial troubles.

We are moving ahead with our plans because a global business perspective is more important now than ever before – it is what the world demands.

What we have seen over the last seven months offers a strong argument for why someone must build a business school even a university that understands and connects the significant regions in the world. All the things we spoke of during our global launch last September are even more relevant today and illustrated well in Dubai and the United Arab Emirates:

We talked about the interconnectedness of national and regional economies, with both positive and negative changes having far-reaching impact beyond borders and boundaries. Few places understand this interconnectedness more than Dubai, the meeting ground for the world in the Middle East.

We talked about the advantages of experiencing some of the world’s most important economies first-hand, interacting with the major economic actors – as well as employees and consumers – around the globe. Dubai and the Emirates are beacons of hope for many nations attempting to understand how to succeed better in the 21st Century. We can only understand the opportunities and challenges in the region by being here.

We identified the need for multiple disciplines to come together to find solutions to the root causes of financial, environmental, developmental and health challenges around the globe. Dubai understands this interdependence well as it focuses on integrating transportation, health, leisure, education, finance and environmental considerations in one city.

We noted the need for nation- and community-specific research to help break understand the unique perspective and opportunities in different parts of the world. Again, Dubai and the Emirates are the perfect location to better understand the unique challenges and opportunities confronting the Gulf Region. No school purporting to have a global strategy could ignore this region and consider itself truly global.
We are committed to “rethinking the boundaries of business school,” and fulfilling that commitment means being bold and innovative when others may be having second thoughts.

We haven’t ignored the changing world economic conditions – the reality is quite the reverse.

The current financial slowdown around the world is informing our teaching and our research, helping our students to become the leaders who will spur economic recovery and shape the global economy of tomorrow.

As we educate, we also hope to learn – there is a wealth of cultural, economic, social, environmental, and political knowledge to be gained from living, working, and teaching in Dubai.

In Dubai, the shifting financial landscape has served to highlight the need for a business education program that will provide future business leaders with first-hand insights on just how interconnected our world is, with common threads running through economics, culture, and leadership.

It is therefore with great humility and excitement that we participate in this wonderful event today.

Meaningful student and faculty engagement in the region are critical components of our success as a leading institution of business education.

Thank you for agreeing to be the location that we begin this engagement.

END OF REMARKS