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Empowering Hearts and Minds: A Transformative Experience for a New IIUM International Staff Member at AHAS KIRKHS I'badah Camp 2024

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As a new academic staff who joined AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (AHAS KIRKHS) at the IIUM just two months ago, my participation in AHAS KIRKHS I'badah Camp 2024 was both unique and profoundly empowering, offering a transformative experience. Not only did the camp serve as a warm welcome to me into such an enlightening spiritual and academic environment of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) but it also

KIRKHS.

As a simple scholar with over twenty years of academic experience in English literature at the university level, both in Yemen and Malaysia, my expectation of the AHAS KIRKHS *I'badah* Camp 2024 was shaded by a mixture of excitement and curiosity. The night before the camp, I found myself restless and contemplative, wondering whether this experience would mirror the usual team-building exercises and activities I had used to or offer something truly transformative. Honestly, the hours of that sleepless Sunday night were spent pondering a single question:

Would this camp provide a unique fusion of spiritual transformation and academic growth, or would it simply follow familiar patterns? As the newest member of the staff at AHAS KIRKHS, I was sincerely eager to see how the event would shape my personal development and professional journey. My anticipation consumed my thoughts throughout that night, and this sense of expectation felt distant by the time Monday morning arrived.



From the warm welcoming speech to the closing remarks delivered by the patron of the camp and the Dean of the Kulliyah, Prof.

AHAS KIRKHS *I'badah* Camp 2024, despite its brief two-day duration, had an extraordinary impact on me. It surpassed the cumulative value of my previous twenty years of academic experience at other institutions. The depth and intensity of the camp's activities, the talks of professors and experts and the aspirations from the leaders redefined my perspective on professional and personal development, proving that even a short, well-orchestrated experience at the IIUM can be profoundly transformative and more enriching than decades of prior academic engagements elsewhere.

In other words, the *I'badah* Camp was an immersive spiritual retreat, focusing on acts of worship (*I'badah*) that centred the participants' hearts and minds on the core principles of Islam. The day and night prayers, the Qur'anic recitations and *tadabbur*, the comprehensive discussions and the spiritual reflections formed the backbone of the camp's schedule. For me, the spiritual activities provided a strong, calming and grounding experience. It really reinforced the notion that spirituality is not separate from professional life, especially in an environment like the IIUM's, where both dimensions are integrated. Engaging in the acts of worship alongside the leaders and colleagues created a sense of unity, brotherhood and belonging, reminding me that we are all part of a greater mission that transcends individual academic goals. Further, the experience of the camp has solidified my understanding of the unique blend of spirituality and scholarship that defines AHAS KIRKHS. It has reinforced my commitment to contributing meaningfully to our academic community at IIUM while remaining anchored in the Islamic values and norms that guide our work. As I continue my journey at AHAS KIRKHS, I am inspired to integrate the lessons learned from this transformative experience of the camp into my role as a *Murrabi* at AHAS KIRKAH.

Last but not least, I would like to express my intense feelings of gratitude to the Patron of the camp and the Dean of AHAS KIRKHS and his wonderful and dedicated organizing team for their untiring support, leadership, and efforts in making this event fruitful and a real success. Their dedication to creating an environment where

end. Above all, the Kulliyah genuine leadership's commitment and meticulous planning to nurturing the holistic development of staff reflected clearly during the camp is truly creditable and have left a lasting impact on me as long as I live, so long as my eyes can see and my heart beats. I feel deeply appreciative and highly honoured to be part of an academic community that prioritizes not just intellectual growth, but also spiritual and moral enrichment. As being the latest addition to the Kulliyah in 2024, the guidance, encouragement, and hospitality I received from the Kulliyah's leadership, colleagues and organizing committee have made me feel welcomed and sustained in my new role at IIUM. *Wa Billah Al-Twafiq wa Al-Hidayah.****

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