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Soil physicist **Anwar Battikhi** is currently president of the Jordan Society for Scientific Research, which brings together public and private sector researchers for discussions like this Conference of Research involving nearly 1,500 scientists.

ADVANCING SCIENCE & EDUCATION IN JORDAN

By Melea Reicks Licht

Ask Anwar Battikhi where he's from and he'll offer an oratory of familial descent beginning with his great grandfather's emigration from Syria to Jordan in the mid-19th century.

It's clear roots run deep for this world-renowned soil scientist who has a knack for storytelling as well as agricultural research, educational leadership and policymaking.



Anwar Battikhi

Battikhi ('77 PhD soil physics) of Amman, Jordan is a professor of soil physics and irrigation at the University of Jordan and a recognized expert in several agricultural disciplines.

He also serves as president of the Jordan Society for Scientific Research, which has about 600 members. The group holds bi-weekly activities for its members in various fields to share problems, brainstorm solutions and make those leading the private and public sectors aware of hurdles facing researchers.

As the former Secretary General of The Higher Council for Science and Technology, he represented that organization and the Kingdom of Jordan before Arab, regional

and international institutions and bodies concerned with science and technology.

"The Higher Council for Science and Technology is where all the plans are set for Jordan for future research and to solve current problems," he says.

Prior to his current position, he served as a faculty member and administrator at the University of Jordan for 20 years, before being appointed vice president for Jordan University for Science and Technology, then president of the Hashemite University. He made significant changes during his tenure as president that led to exponential growth in numbers of faculty and students. He also established an institute for water and environment and seven other schools.

"I introduced new departments needed to solve the unemployment problem and to inject a new blood in the working force with new specialties, high qualifications and with new ideas," Battikhi says.

Battikhi was presented with the Award of Excellence in Education in the Kingdom of Jordan and received the Abd el Hamid Shoman Award for Best Young Scientist in the Arab World in 1986. He received the ISU Distinguished Alumni Award in 2009.

He holds his experiences at Iowa State in high regard, especially those with the late Don Kirkham. "Professor Kirkham

was the father of soil physics in the United States and even in the world," Battikhi says. "He taught me dedication and the science of research methodology in soil water."

But, he says it was what he learned at Iowa State besides the science that was most important to his career successes.

"I grew personally and developed leadership skills," he says. "I learned how to listen to others, how to have mutual respect between students and instructors and how to be objective – all essential in the positions I held during the last 35 years." 

ONLINE EXTRAS: www.ag.iastate.edu/stories

Battikhi received the ISU Distinguished Alumni Award in 2009. The following excerpt is from his acceptance speech. The complete text can be found in **STORIES** online.

"I believe that through the power of knowledge and science, we can unite to create a more coherent and happier world for us to live in. What if all resources wasted in wars and killing are invested to further develop humanity? Our earth has become a small village, so what if peace and understanding become the domineering power that holds it together?... This will help us see beyond our differences and focus on the value of the human being."