

Bilkent University: A World-Class Academic Community

by Adnan Akay

Since its inception in 1984, Bilkent University has become a model university, known for its innovative approaches and structure not only in Turkey but also around the world. Considering the environment in which it was created, the rapid ascendance of Bilkent University may be a near miracle. Today, the sprawling campus with its own schools, concert hall, faculty residences, and adjacent shopping center gives the sense of a self-contained oasis. Most of the faculty members live on campus, where spring through fall colorful flora makes it a very pleasant place to study, work and live. A small family of friendly but very shy foxes adds to the aura of campus life.

Bilkent is more than a conventional university. It is instead an academic community that includes Bilkent University, preK-12 schools that grant International Baccalaureate degrees, music schools, a cyberpark to incubate small companies, and a renowned symphony orchestra. Our vision for Bilkent is to build on its reputation as a world-class academic community whose faculty and staff educate outstanding students who go on to become tomorrow's global citizens. As such, they will conceive, lead and contribute to activities and solve problems for the well-being of humanity, and create and disseminate art, ideas, and knowledge that enrich humanity and contribute to the quality of life in the nation, region and the world.

Bilkent is a research-intensive university that provides excellent educational opportunities to students, covering a broad spectrum of intellectual activities ranging from exact sciences and engineering to humanities and social sciences with law, business, arts and design interspersed in between.

In addition to Bilkent's research opportunities, the Faculty of Music and Performing Arts educates talented musicians and actors, has arguably the best symphony orchestra in Turkey, and offers frequent concerts to the public with world-renowned guest conductors. The Music Department attracts the top talent in Turkey to its primary to graduate-level programs and develops them as preferred artists and academics in their chosen fields. Similarly, the Department of Performing Arts is the first choice for many students as they become top-rated actors of stage and screen.

The six departments of the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture have a strong presence in their respective arenas, as well as urban



Bilkent in spring



View of the East Campus including Hotel Bilkent and preK-12 schools



Bilkent Concert Hall



research and education in Turkey and beyond. Their graduates – creative, innovative and highly competent in their fields– bring together social, cognitive and technical aspects of arts and design to influence built environments.

Scholarly research in the Faculty of Humanities and Letters helps our understanding of the diverse needs of humanity and cultures and the moral and ethical foundations of society. Creative work and studies in literature are synergistically spread over three departments: American Culture and Literature, English Language and Literature, and Turkish Literature. The Archeology Department is the first English-language Archeology Department in Turkey with several excavations in its portfolio. The Philosophy Department, unique in Turkey, is poised to develop an international profile through its research in “engaged philosophy” in collaboration with numerous other programs at Bilkent. The Cultures, Civilizations and Ideas program provides the educational underpinnings of humanities and letters studies throughout the university. The Translation and Interpretation Department offers exceptional training of students with experienced instructors.



With its internationally-ranked departments, the Faculty of Economics, Administrative and Social Sciences enjoys a strong reputation in these fields. The Economics Department faculty address research in major fields of economics, microeconomics, macroeconomics and econometrics. The Department of Political Science and Public Administration and the Department of International Relations both offer rich curricula in and scholarly contributions to their respective fields. The Psychology Department has developed an international reputation through research with a cognitive and interdisciplinary approach to psychology. The Department of History, a graduate program, is recognized internationally for the innovative historical scholarship of its faculty.



The Faculty of Business Administration, with its well-placed graduates, enjoys a strong name-recognition in Turkey. It has a popular executive MBA program in addition to its standing MBA program. Research in the Faculty focuses on accounting, finance, management, marketing and decision science and operations management.

Through its innovative curriculum and experienced faculty, the Faculty of Law educates future lawyers who fully understand the complexities associated with the legal infrastructure. Students learn to practice law and are equipped with appropriate comparative and compulsory knowledge on a global scale.

The Faculty of Education prepares high school teachers for leadership in education and excellence in teaching through its Graduate School of Education. The students are provided international teacher-preparation experience.

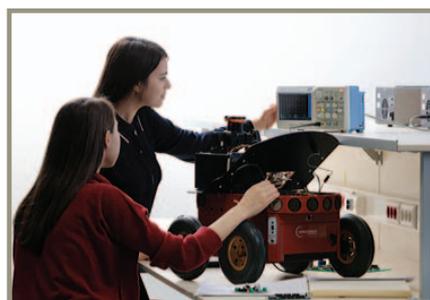
The Departments of Chemistry, Mathematics, Molecular Biology and Genetics, and Physics, as well as the interdisciplinary programs in Materials Science, Nanotechnology and Neuroscience of the Faculty of Science, are internationally known for their research and graduates. A broad range of fundamental research is addressed in the Faculty: from basic and applied research at molecular, cellular and organism levels to various fields of condensed matter physics; and from molecular electronics and self-arranging molecules to magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) methods, superconductors and lasers, photosynthesis, and new spectroscopic methods. Research in pure and applied mathematics covers algebra, algebraic topology, algebraic geometry, complex analysis, functional analysis, number theory, analysis of nonlinear systems, and general relativity.

Bilkent's Faculty of Engineering provides innovative engineering education and research, with sought-after graduates and significant research output. Upon entering professional life, Bilkent graduates rapidly reach leadership positions. Many of those who have continued their graduate education in prestigious universities abroad have become award-winning faculty members in top universities in Turkey and beyond. Through its Applied Schools, Bilkent educates professionals for businesses with special emphasis on the use of latest technologies.

Several research institutes and centers complement the Faculties. Prominent among them are the two centers on nanotechnology (UNAM and NANOTAM), and the new Brain Research Center that also houses the National MRI center (UMRAM). In addition, several other centers bring together researchers across disciplines to address complex problems.

Bilkent faculty members are known for their creative work and dedication to educating students. Numerous faculty members have received national and international awards, and several are recipients of the coveted European Research Council (ERC) Awards.

Bilkent graduates are known for their poise, ability to effectively communicate, and competence in their chosen fields. As the first nonprofit foundation (private) university in Turkey, Bilkent offers scholarships to attract top undergraduates from around the world.





Approximately 13,000 students are enrolled in thirty-six Departments in nine Faculties and three Applied Schools. Since the medium of education is English, students who need to improve their language skills are enrolled in the English Language Preparatory School. Among all the students that attend Bilkent, approximately one-half receive substantial financial support from the university.

Bilkent has a unique funding model, i.e., it owns numerous companies that comprise its endowment. While Bilkent has flexibility and financial independence, several aspects of its governance are subject to rules issued by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE), as is the case for all universities in Turkey. Within Turkey, Bilkent is in a class by itself in terms of research and creative activities, the education it provides and the manner by which the university operates. With twenty-five percent of faculty and eight percent of students coming from forty different countries, Bilkent has a strong international presence.



The diversity of faculty and their intellectual interests make up the core support for Bilkent University in its mission “to help students develop themselves as critical, analytical and independent thinkers and life-long learners, so that they may become the competent, creative, broad-minded, ethical and socially responsible leaders of tomorrow who will contribute to the advancement of humanity.” The curricula support the mission by blending science and hands-on activities, as well as the values of humanities and social sciences with those of professions to help our students develop as critical thinkers, innovators and educated professionals.

The key to Bilkent’s success rests with the individuals who make up the Bilkent community. Bilkent’s historical successes will be continued by anticipating future opportunities and needs in education and research and making sound decisions in hiring and promotion of faculty members. To paraphrase Nobel Laureate Herb Simon, insisting on excellence during hiring, reappointment and promotions can turn a mediocre faculty into a first-rate one. Bilkent has first-rate faculty colleagues.

As we look forward to an exciting future for Bilkent University, we will continue to seek excellence and innovation, to try to see the unseen, and to harmonize seemingly different disciplines and values. We will build on its history and further the vision of the founder of Bilkent, the late Professor İhsan Doğramacı.