



**Name |** Najah Ashry

### **Short CV (Biography)**

Najah Ashry is Vice President of Strategic National Advancement and Senior Associate to the President at KAUST. Dr. Ashry has more than 20 years of leadership experience in academic administration. Since KAUST's founding, she was instrumental in establishing and expanding several of the university's key offices. As the university's first Senior Associate Provost for Graduate Affairs, she spearheaded admissions, enrollment management, registration, student life services, student development and support, and scholarship programs. In her current capacity, Dr. Ashry guides KAUST's strategy for impact in Saudi Arabia by supporting the country's transformation needs. Through a broad portfolio of strategic priorities that include talent development and management, corporate social responsibility, and strategic engagement, her work is devoted to helping KAUST create the national scientific infrastructure required for the Kingdom's future innovation ecosystem. Dr. Ashry has served on numerous key Saudi and international boards, including the Center of Planning & Strategic Studies for the Principality of Makkah Region and the Dow Chemical Company Sustainability External Advisory Council. Prior to her 10 years at KAUST, Dr. Ashry served as Dean of the female section at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. She has a bachelor's in computer science, an MBA, a post-graduate diploma in quantitative and qualitative research methods, and a PhD in Management Information Systems with a focus on strategic development and planning.

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**Lecture Title |** Empowering Women to Lead in a Changing World

### **Abstract**

Saudi Arabia is in a new era that is embracing knowledge and innovation to drive social change, accelerate economic development, and improve its global position in the world. The country cannot succeed unless it prioritizes and empowers women as leaders in the workforce. The country knows this, and is making significant reforms. The 2020 to 2030 decade will be one of human capital development for the Kingdom, and women are central to its success. With the aim of increasing their participation in the workforce by nearly 10%, there is much work ahead, but strong gains have also been made. Empowering Women to Lead in a Changing World discusses where we are in the historic effort to bring women into the national conversation and into leadership positions. It considers potential blind spots inherent in such undertakings, and offers suggestions on how to navigate the immense barrier – while also recognizing the unprecedented opportunities that this new era brings, particularly as the country reaches its youth population peak this year. The talk explores matters unique to Saudi Arabia, while bringing a global perspective to the common issues in the worldwide push for women's inclusion and empowerment. It looks at KAUST as model for the Kingdom and explores ways in which the university has contributed to the national vision, managed change to build a unique culture and community marked by excellence, and can serve as a model as other Saudi institutions prioritize women's empowerment and leadership for the 21st century.