This book, too, is an “expedition” of friends. People from different countries, cultures, genders, and persuasions have permitted us to put aside accidental differences and join in a common conversation about one of the most important endeavors of human beings, education. I cannot think of a more fitting way to commence the celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the Higher Colleges of Technology than to share with readers of this anthology the experiences, ideas, reflections, and wisdom of friends in fact, and friends in ideas.

The Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) were established at a time when the UAE was less than 20 years old. From a few colleges in 1988, the HCT has grown into a system of 15 colleges located throughout the country, serving more than 16,000 students. Its visionary Chancellor, His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, is a forward-looking man of great imagination and determination. To him, at a very young age, fell the challenging responsibility of creating a system of higher education that not only responded to the emerging and urgent manpower needs of a young Nation, but also a system that would cultivate, in new generations of Emiratis, values that would serve them well in a globalized and ever changing world. From the outset, Sheikh Nahayan envisioned an educational system that embraced the values of open enquiry, critical-thinking, personal integrity, intellectual honesty and tolerance for competing ideas.

The writings selected for this anthology have been authored by
people from diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives. Some of them have an intimate knowledge of the HCT and the country, and they write with passion about an institution and a country they love and appreciate. Others have had a passing encounter with the HCT through an occasional visit or two and have come to admire an institution that has exceeded their expectations in many ways. And yet others have written with no knowledge of the HCT but with an interest in the business of the HCT and all similar institutions. What they all have in common, however, is a belief in the need to constantly explore the ideas and views that shape education and challenge the reader to think about new ideas, questioning old ideas and assumptions that had gone unchallenged before. They know that what occurs within the halls of academia can have a great impact on the lives of students as individuals, as citizens, and as members of the world community. They recognize that the future belongs to the young. Thus they want them to be imbued with the kinds of values that make for a “cleaner” world with less strife, and where the human potential, wherever it is found, is liberated from poverty, prejudice, hatred and conflict.

As the HCT looks to its future, it is my sincere hope that its agenda will be guided by the wisdom and aspirations of those whose writings have been included in this anthology. And while the initial intent was to make this publication available only to our staff and students, it has become evident that the richness and variety of its content lends itself to a much wider audience. It has been decided that this volume will become the first among many of its kind that we will publish and share with institutions and individuals around the world. We do so, in part, to express our thanks and gratitude to those who have helped us, and those who continue to help us, build a world-class institution that benefits from the knowledge and expertise of the many who come from different shores and continents.

As editor of this anthology, I welcome you to join our “expedition.”