KAIMRC’s goal of becoming a world leader in translational medical research can only be achieved with a talented and dedicated workforce. Its leaders set out to build a community of world-class biomedical scientists and are fully committed to providing them with an environment conducive for productive research with all the training and assistance they need.

To strengthen this community, KAIMRC is developing local talent and updating the training of its current researchers. The numbers have grown from just seven employees in 2007 to nearly 400 today. About 25 per cent are research scientists, and the rest research support staff, administrative staff, and medical technologists. Women make up almost half of the workforce, and their numbers are growing.

More than 60 per cent of the staff is Saudi Arabian – many having trained or worked at leading international institutions before returning to the Kingdom. But, because science is a collaborative effort, KAIMRC is also committed to encouraging diversity within its workforce by attracting expertise from abroad. It wants to recruit world-class thinkers, all of whom are eminent in their chosen fields and can strengthen KAIMRC’s research culture by sharing their skills and knowledge through intensive training and educational programmes.

“We want to hire the most competent candidates and this is not determined by nationality,” says Dr Barrak Al Zomaie, KAIMRC’s director of operation. “But we strive to develop Saudi scientists, so for every international scientist we hire in the core facility, we place a junior Saudi scientist with them for training.”

KAIMRC has established a scholarship programme to enhance the intellectual growth and professional development of its researchers. They also receive ongoing training in a wide variety of disciplines, from biochemistry, cell biology and cancer genetics to tissue engineering, nanotechnology and biomedical ethics.

Outreach and collaboration
Every research team at KAIMRC is made up of research scientists, clinicians and research faculty members, focusing on common diseases such as cancer and genetic disorders. To support its researchers further, the centre provides starter funds through its research office, which can offer up to half a million dollars for each research project.

The research centre is also fostering collaborations around the world. As well as maintaining regional partnerships with other Saudi institutions and organizations, such as the Ministry of Health, the Saudi Food and Drug Authority, and the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), KAIMRC also has several international collaborators. These include academic institutions, such as the American University in Beirut, the Swiss Institute of Bioinformatics, and the University of Toronto, and industry partners, such as General Electric, Novartis, and Roche.

“We get a lot of support from the institution to train new staff, so KAIMRC provides a great opportunity for collaboration and science development,” says Dr Majed Jeraisy, chairman of KAIMRC’s Research Office. “We are looking for people who can deliver, and they will be appreciated and remunerated accordingly.”

Through this open approach, KAIMRC is creating a rich multicultural environment in which its staff can execute high quality biomedical research programmes that will ultimately help understand and cure a wide range of diseases that afflict both Saudi and global populations.