

JMU and Kosovo Partnerships Committee

Midyear Report

Fall 2023

Chair(s): John Hulsey

Members: Bob Kolvoord, Michael Stoloff, Kristopher Wiley

Charge:

- Develop and approve strategic plan and budget for 2023-2024.
- Assess current context and opportunities to engage in feasible and high-impact partnership activities with two-preferred higher education institutions in Kosovo, the University of Prishtina and International Business College – Mitrovica.
- Integrate JMU-Kosovo Partnership activities with other existing global activities, particularly related to other post-conflict contexts.

Summary of Current Semester Activity:

1. **Engage and Support Graduate Students from Kosovo (Champion Michael Stoloff).** Last year, JMU awarded one assistantship to an incoming graduate student from Kosovo. Many very strong students applied and several earned admission and assistantships through their programs. This ongoing effort has built a reputation for JMU in Kosovo and attracts very strong graduate students. These students have been particularly active contributors to the graduate school and within their graduate programs, both inside and outside of the classroom.
2. **Collaboration between the Master's Program in Florence and the Faculty of Law at the University of Prishtina (Champion EUPS in Florence, Chris Blake, Caterina Paolucci).**
 - a. **EUPS Student Internships in Prishtina.** The EUPS program resumed the program whereby an EUPS student does a summer internship in collaboration with the Center of Transitional Justice at the Faculty of Law at the University of Prishtina. In Summer 2023, two students successfully completed the internship and, with the support of EUPS faculty and faculty from the Center, submitted a Fulbright application in the Fall to return to perform a research project in Kosovo. One student has advanced to the semifinal stage of the Fulbright selection process. The EUPS program intends to continue the internship program this summer.
 - b. **University of Prishtina and Faculty Engagement in Florence.** The EUPS program also restarted exchange activities. In October 2023, Prof. Istrefi traveled with four students selected from the School of Law at the University of Prishtina to participate in political science workshops organized by JMU programs in Florence. These students stayed for about a week and interacted with their JMU peers, both academically and socially. They were introduced to University of Florence and EUI faculty/students as well, to increase the usefulness of the experience. Feedback on these interactions from both the UP students and the

JMU students was positive. Future collaboration in this vein will be much easier now that students from Kosovo have access to Visa-free travel into the Schengen zone.

3. **College of Education Activities (Champion Kristofer Wiley)** The College of Education continues work to integrate multiple site relationships in Kosovo into our curriculum, faculty efforts, and student experience. Following an exploratory visit in Spring 2023 to Pristina and Mitrovica, we identified several opportunities for collaborative work.
 - a. **Student and Public School Educator Engagement.** The first has already been enacted. In July 2023, Chris Hass supervised two students to attend the Pristina International Summer University. The students spent two weeks taking morning classes and meeting undergraduate students from Kosovo and around the world. In addition, Vesna Hart contributed some Madison Fellowship funding that allowed two educators from the Harrisonburg Public Schools to accompany, with a focus topic of trauma-informed pedagogy. The symbiotic interaction of these two practicing educators, two teachers in training, and a faculty member proved very powerful for all stakeholders. We intend to repeat this program in Summer 2024. Chris Hass intends to apply to teach at the Summer University alongside University of Pristina partner Blerta Mustafa, and COE staff member Kendal Swartzentruber will accompany a larger team of 4-6 students to the program. While on the ground, Kendal will be re-energizing conversations with Drita Kadriu, an education administrator in Mitrovica, surrounding resources and partnership in social and emotional learning. The College is currently working on best mechanisms for bringing student, staff, and faculty learning back and disseminating it more broadly for COE stakeholders.
 - b. **Virtual Learning** In addition to this summer program, Chris Hass and Blerta Mustafa are developing a curricular plan to conduct virtual exchange between their university students. Originally intended for Fall 2023, logistics proved too complicated, so they are working toward Spring 2024. We imagine this virtual exchange opportunity may be a requirement for students chosen to attend PISU in the summer.
 - c. **Research Collaboration on K-12 partners.** On the five-year horizon, we hope to see some research directions develop between the stakeholders mentioned above. K-12 partners in both Pristina and Mitrovica are eager to partner, as well, which could be facilitated through our Teacher Leadership and Educational Leadership programs. The former is already entertaining international cohorts from other nations, and we are developing both mechanisms and programming to further internationalize the certificate.