

Kosovo and JMU Partnerships Committee
2022-2023 academic year
Final report

Membership

Chair: Vesna Hart

Members: Herb Amato, Mike Davis, Bob Kolvoord, John Hulsey, Michael Stoloff, Kristofor Wiley

Committee charge:

- Develop and approve strategic plan and budget for 2022-2023
- 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.

Final report:

I. ENGAGING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN KOSOVO

Engage and support graduate students from Kosovo (Champion: Michael Stoloff). James Madison University continues to be a popular destination for students from Kosovo who are seeking graduate degrees. For Fall 2023, seven students from Kosovo completed applications for admission to four different programs. As of this writing, four of these students were admitted and had accepted their admission offers. Two anticipate enrolling in our Communication and Advocacy, MA, and two anticipate enrolling in our Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication, MA program.

Three graduate students are successfully completing their first-year experiences and anticipate completing their programs after a second year. These include Marigona Gashi, the recipient of our Kosovo Assistantship.

Two graduate students are expected to complete their programs on time and graduate in May 2023. With their graduation, JMU will have six graduate student alumni from Kosovo.

Every student that we have enrolled from Kosovo have made excellent progress in their programs and they have achieved post-graduation success. It is noteworthy, that these students regularly take advantage of professional development opportunities available at JMU. For example, students participated in our Three-Minute Thesis (3-MT) competition and Xixellonje Nebihu tied for third place. Other students also participated in our Graduate Showcase, making both oral and poster presentations. Given the small number of students from Kosovo who are on campus, their participation rate was very

high.

Another impact of these students has been through their leadership in the Muslim Student Association (MSA). The MSA sponsored an event “Understanding Religious Diversity,” on September 29, 2022. That group has emerged as a clear presence on campus as a result of leadership from multiple students including some of our students from Kosovo. We will continue to promote our graduate programs to prospective students from Kosovo. If the committee chooses to continue the Kosovo Graduate Assistantship, we will advertise and recruit a new student who can begin their program of study during Fall 2024.

Kosovo graduate students organized an event to celebrate Kosovo’s 15th Independence Day, highlighted in [JMU News](#).

II. FACULTY AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

1) **Continue successful academic activities between EUPS and Faculty of Law, University in Prishtina** (Champion: EUPS in Florence, Chris Blake, Caterina Paolucci)

Per the work plan for 2022-2023, the EU Policy Studies concentration of the M.A. in Political Science plans two interactions involving University of Prishtina, Kosovo:

- **EUPS Student Internships in Prishtina.** During the 2022-23 academic year, of the activities planned between EUPS and UP that were suspended because of the pandemic last year, we have resumed the EUPS student internship program in Prishtina. In the fall the internship possibility has been introduced to the new EUPS cohort and after a competitive application process, two EUPS students have been selected for an internship with University of Prishtina. The internship, focused on research on EU-Kosovo relations, is already underway and the students will fly to Kosovo at the end of May. Prof. Remzije Istrefi of the Faculty of Law will be the on-site supervisor as students work with the Center of Transitional Justice at University of Prishtina.
- **University of Prishtina Students and Faculty Engagement in Florence.** Another activity we have resumed after last year’s pandemic-induced suspension, is the faculty and student academic and cultural learning and engagement, which was very successful in the past in bringing faculty and students from Kosovo to Italy allowing them to experience JMU’s academic and social context through the JMU Florence branch.

In October 2023 Prof. Istrefi will bring 4 students from the Faculty of Law, University of Prishtina to participate in a political science workshop at JMU Florence. They will engage in academic and cultural interaction with their JMU peers for about a week. They will be introduced to University of Florence and EUI faculty/students as well, to increase the usefulness of the experience.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the EUPS program in Florence will continue to engage with faculty and student from Faculty of Law, University in Prishtina through the collaborative academic programming as in 2022-2023.

2) **Model European Union: JMU Political Science and University of Pristina Faculty of Law** (Champion: John Hulsey)

The JMU Political Science and University of Prishtina agreed to resume participation in Model European Union event in Washington, D.C., November 2023, followed by a visit of Kosovo faculty members and students to JMU for additional academic and cultural engagement and learning. John Hulsey is planning to collaborate with Remzije Istrefi and colleagues from University of Prishtina.

3) **College of Education activities** (Champion: Kristofor Wiley)

The College of Education supported a delegation from the COE to visit preferred partner universities in Kosovo, as well as local public and private schools, March 4-10, 2023.

The delegation included:

- Melanie Shoffner, Professor of English language literacy
- Chris Hass, Assistant Professor, Early, Elementary and Reading Education
- Kendal Swartzentruber, Education Coordinator, Virginia Department of Education, Region 5 Training and Technical Assistance Center
- Kristofor Wiley, Associate Professor and Global Engagement Liaison at COE
- Vesna Hart, Director of Global Learning and Partnerships, Center for Global Engagement
- Xixellonja Nebihu, graduate student and citizen of Kosovo
- Xavier Grier, graduate assistant in Dean's office

The itinerary for this visit included visits and discussions with the following potential partners in Prishtina and Mitrovica:

- Drita Kadriu, Director of Education, Mitrovica – a discussion of professional development needs, accompanied by a tour of a local middle school with the school director
- Faculty and administration from the International Business College – Mitrovica – a sharing of research directions, potential student exchange, and curricular needs beyond education (specifically including entrepreneurship and instructional technology proposals).
- Rector and Vice-Rector, University of Prishtina
- International Office, University of Prishtina
- Faculty of Philology (English language and literature), University of Prishtina – this is currently our most active partner interested in joint teaching and research, and we had the opportunity to meet with both graduate and undergraduate students
- Faculty of Education, University of Prishtina – this included a former Fulbright Scholar at JMU, Arlinda Beka
- US Embassy, Prishtina – funding opportunities
- Secondary school visit

Potential and realized outcomes for this exploratory:

- Renewed contact with Blerta Mustafa at the University of Prishtina. Mustafa and Chris Hass have been in contact multiple times via email and Zoom, building relationships toward future projects.
- College of Education is currently recruiting students and creating a budget to send a delegation to the University of Prishtina Summer University, a two-week non-credit bearing academic program in July for global student exchange. Chris Hass will likely mentor, giving him a chance to further develop collaborative teaching and research with Blerta Mustafa in person.
- Discussions with COE faculty in instructional technology have begun under the possibility of Embassy funding for train-the-trainer professional development through IBC-M.
- A delegation from IBC-M is interested to visit the United States next academic year, which provides an opportunity to put them in touch with contacts in entrepreneurship and instructional technology.

III. STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP

Addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding between University of Prishtina and JMU, that addresses specific activities between EUPS, JMU and Faculty of Law, University of Prishtina has been signed by both parties.

IV. IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING

Collaborate with UP and IBC-M on any open grant opportunities (Champion: CGE/Vesna Hart with relevant centers, faculty, and staff)

During the visit to Kosovo in March 2023, conversations with U.S. Embassy representatives revealed interest in supporting professional development for K-12 teachers in the area of educational technology. This project is to be developed in the coming months, pending interest and capacity to fulfill the expectations of the project.

Submitted by Vesna Hart, JMU-Kosovo Partnerships Committee Chair

Committee members:

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