

Kosovo and JMU Partnerships Committee 2021-2022 Academic Year - Yearend Report

Membership

Chair: Vesna Hart

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

Charge: The Committee on Kosovo and JMU Partnerships plan on work in the coming year will include the following activities:

- Develop and approve strategic plan and budget for 2021-2022

- Assess current (pandemic and post-pandemic) 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.

Reflection on the committee charge for 2021-2022 year

This year remained uniquely challenging as global education continued to adapt and engagement with international higher education partner institutions remained difficult through the pandemic. The challenge is not only on the JMU and the U.S. travel/risk management side, but determined by the partner institutions and its country policies. Related to the 2nd and 3rd charge, the pandemic globally has not allowed for development of deeper and new opportunities yet. In fact, next academic year will likely need to focus on re-establishing the working relationships and re-igniting the dormant projects. Similarly, expansion of the focus to other post-conflict context will take more time to be developed into the next academic year.

Yearend report of activities:

I. ENGAGING AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL IN KOSOVO

1) Engage and support graduate students from Kosovo (Champion: Michael Stoloff)

James Madison University has become a popular destination for students from Kosovo who are seeking graduate degrees. All the students we have enrolled from Kosovo have made excellent progress in their programs and they have achieved post-graduation success. One of our graduates has been leading a COVID-19 laboratory at Johns Hopkins Hospital, publishing many high-impact studies, and served as the May 2022 commencement speaker for the graduate ceremony. One student, in Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication, M.A., graduated in May and two students, one in Equity and Cultural Diversity, M.Ed., and another in Adult Education Human Resource Development, M.S.Ed., will be continuing their education into 2022-2023 academic year.

Because our Kosovo assistantship recipient is graduating, we again advertised for candidates who will be funded with the Madison Vision Graduate Assistantship for the Advancement of Kosovo (see <https://jmu.edu/grad/kosovo>). We recruited applicants for this assistantship with e-mail to individuals from Kosovo who have inquired about graduate education, and advertising on Facebook and Google Display ads. In addition, current recipient of the Madison Vision Graduate Assistantship has organized an online information session on January 11, 2022 where she and Michael Stoloff discussed graduate school in the United States and at JMU, and where we encouraged students to apply for the Kosovo Assistantship. Over 100 Kosovar students attended this online information session.

Nine students from Kosovo completed applications for admission to seven different programs. Four of these students were recommended for admission by the programs to which they had applied. A committee reviewed these recommendations and selected an applicant to the Communication and Advocacy, M.A. program, for the Kosovo Assistantship. Subsequently, two Kosovar students, accepted in Communication & Advocacy, M.A., and Public Administration, M.P.A., were offered Graduate Assistantships from their department. The fourth student applied to Writing, Rhetoric and Technical Communication, M.A., and would like to attend, but he has deferred his admission to August 2023 to give himself more time to complete his undergraduate degree program and secure an assistantship.

All-in-all, we are anticipating five students from Kosovo to be enrolled during the 2022-23 academic year, and without any additional applicants we should have at four enrolled during 2023-24.

2) **Contribute to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency** (Champion: Bob Kolvoord)

In February 2022, the Board of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) has approved the list of experts to be engaged in the process of program accreditation this year. Bob Kolvoord is on the list of approved experts to conduct program accreditation; however, he has yet to be invited to an accreditation visit.

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)

Unfortunately, Kosovo remained cordoned off from travel into the European Union until very recently. Thus, it was not possible to get University of Prishtina colleagues to recruit Kosovars to travel to Florence for field experiences and/or for the policy colloquium exercise in May within the EUPS program.

Next year, in hope that travel between Kosovo and European Union will be restored, EUPS program hopes to resume in-person collaborations with Kosovo partners. Possible activities include in-person internships and participation in a conference in Florence, Italy.

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

The ongoing global pandemic challenges have stood in the way of advancing the relationships and developing opportunities for collaboration between COE faculty and partners in Kosovo. Therefore, the College of Education continues to plan for the following activities for AY 2022-2023:

- A team of students, faculty, and administrators from the College of Education plans to visit Kosovo during the Fall 2022 semester. The focus of the visit is on needs assessment and relationship building with teacher education professionals at the University of Prishtina and colleagues at IBC-M.
- Building upon the contacts made by Vesna Hart and Kristofor Wiley, the training in virtual student exchange received by five CoE faculty, it is likely that Melanie Shoffner and Kristofor Wiley will be able to coordinate virtual exchange experiences in conjunction with the University of Prishtina and perhaps IBC-M. Possible course partnerships include Methods of Teaching Literature and Teaching in a Diverse Society.
- Melanie Shoffner and Kristofor Wiley continue to seek opportunities for State Department funding to continue the program of professional development begun in Fall 2018, first with Shoffner's travel to Kosovo, then followed by the visit of four K-12 Kosovar teachers to Harrisonburg.

3) **Global Virtual Exchange sessions with select faculty/classes and general population** (CGE/Vesna Hart with interested JMU faculty, John Hulsey)

During the Spring 2022 semester John Hulsey, Associate Professor of Political Science and his students engaged in Global Virtual Exchange with professor Remzije Istrefi and students from the Faculty of Law at University of Prishtina. The focus of the virtual exchange was on challenges to democracy in Kosovo, European Union, and United States.

Although an attempt was made to reach out to higher education institutions in Rwanda and Northern Iraq, it was difficult to establish firm connections and engage additional universities from post-conflict contexts. This remains a goal to be accomplished during the next academic year.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, Global Virtual Exchange efforts will continue, and the focus on European Union focus may be of interest to additional faculty in Political Science. Additionally, pending the outcomes of the fund-seeking effort by University of Prishtina, Faculty of Law, JMU may be hosting a group of students and a faculty who plan to join the Model EU simulation. John Hulsey will also host the group in his class, should that be possible.

4) **Continue to engage Kosovo task force in making decisions about strategic activities focused on academic affairs** (Champion: CGE/Vesna Hart)

The Kosovo-JMU Partnerships committee meet in September 2021 to finalize and affirm the plan for the 2021-2022 academic year, as well as in May 2022 to review accomplishments and discuss plan for the next academic year.

III. **STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS**

Although Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Kosovo continues to be valid per its terms, requests from both University of Prishtina and IBC-M have been made to have MOUs signed with James Madison University. During the 2021-2022 academic year, the JMU and IBC-M signed an MOU. The MOU between JMU and University of Prishtina is in process of being signed by the University of Prishtina.

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)

While several funding opportunities have been considered, no grant funding has been secured this year. We will continue to seek funding opportunities.