

University Support and Workforce Development Program

Newsletter January-March 2017

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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



1

Context and Effectiveness of Cross-border University Partnerships Interwoven

“Security is a crucial element for development. When you have security, development will also happen. And bad security conditions in Afghanistan have not only affected the academic areas but all aspects of our society.”

 Herat University Administrator

USWDP has established approximately 30 partnerships between Afghan and U.S. higher education institutions to create new market-oriented degree programs and improve the quality of existing ones. Recently, USWDP conducted a study of partnerships at Kabul Polytechnic, Kandahar, and Herat Universities. As part of the study, 28 university administrators and faculty members were asked about motivations to participate in the partnership and how they are benefiting, communication between partner universities, approaches to post-funding sustainability, and the impact of the Afghan context, specifically gender issues and the security environment, on partnership implementation.

The study, representing the first of a three-part review, revealed that perceptions of university administrators and faculty members toward partnership progress is generally positive. Afghan partners noted that they are gaining capacity and the resources they had anticipated and U.S. university partners reported seeing needs being met at Afghan universities. In terms of communication, maintaining dialogue between universities has been challenging due to the geographic distance and significant differences work schedules. U.S. partners said constant clarification of expectations is also necessary to maintain the health and progress of joint activities. Also, sustainability post-funding is an



Spokane Community College faculty member explains his work with the KPU Biomedical Equipment Technology Associate Degree program



A Purdue University faculty member works with students at the new food technology lab at Herat University

issue that university partners said is critical to consider. There was a shared recognition that funding, in addition to security and faculty member interest is necessary for partnership longevity.

An overarching aspect raised was how interwoven context is to the viability, speed of implementation, and quality of each partnership. Over the remaining two years, contextual variables, such as gender perceptions and the level of security will determine whether the partnerships are effective in achieving their objectives. For example, a persistent lack of female faculty members and students on both the Afghan and U.S. sides puts gender equity at risk. Interviewees noted that females involved in partnership activities face greater challenges and risks and are affected by cultural expectations more than their male counterparts. Also discussed by most who participated in the study were the negative impacts of deteriorating security. Tentatively, USWDP will follow-up on these three partnerships at the in 2017 and 2018 to see how partners perceive the results of their work together.

2

MoHE National Curriculum Commission Visits The American University in Cairo

"Most people visit Egypt for its cultural and historical values while some go for the pursuit of knowledge. We went to Egypt and achieved both."

Mr. Sattaruddin Sediqi, Director of Academic Programs Development



MoHE National Curriculum Commission members during their visit to The American University of Cairo

Members of MoHE National Curriculum Commission (NCC) participated in February in an academic exchange program with The American University in Cairo (AUC) to improve their understanding of the scope and process of curriculum reform to meet both student and market needs. Throughout the program, participants were deeply engaged in the presentations by AUC faculty members and expert panelists. The NCC members completed small group activities and held discussions on higher education curricula reform in Afghanistan. They toured the AUC campus including the

library, research center, career center, and old and new campuses. In their free time, the NCC members visited historic sites in Cairo including The National Museum of Egyptian Civilization, the Great Pyramid of Giza, and the Nile River. Upon their return to Kabul, the participants began applying what they learned to finalize guidance for creation of new bachelor degrees in Afghanistan. They also developed suggestions for the Minister of Higher Education on new strategies for strengthening Afghanistan's higher education system.

3

Information Technology Associate Degree Program Gains Strength

The IT Associate Degree program at KPU, Afghanistan's first associate degree, continues to improve the quality of instruction as it welcomes its third cohort of students.

Six faculty members from the Information Technology (IT) Associate Degree at Kabul Polytechnic University (KPU) recently completed a professional development program in Baku, Azerbaijan. The program was developed by Central Georgia Technical College (CGTC), KPU's U.S. university partner working to further improve the IT Associate Degree program, the first of its kind in Afghanistan. The KPU faculty members traveled to ADA University in Baku to take part in several training and mentoring activities that will benefit instruction for the program's third cohort of students. In addition to sessions on computer programming, networking, project management, and adult instructional practices, CGTC faculty members provided an orientation on the U.S. community college system that KPU will reference as they develop a model for increasing the number of associate degrees at their own institution. Participants also observed ADA University courses, toured Khazar University and Baku Oil High School, and met with administrators and faculty members involved in technical education. The professional development program also served to help the faculty members identify areas for further discussion and professional improvements, including program design, curriculum revision, and use of online resources.



KPU Information Technology faculty members complete professional development program in Baku, Azerbaijan



Information Technology Associate Degree Entrance Exam

The KPU faculty returned to Kabul to welcome the 38 new IT students who had been selected based on their entrance exam results. The new cohort includes eight female students. In the opening address to the new students, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Abdul Ahad Khaleqi acknowledged the contribution of USWDP to the IT Associate Degree program, making special mention of the equipment that has been provided to KPU for use by associate degree students and faculty members.

4

Biometric Enrollment Equipment Improves Transparency of Kankor Exam

In 2017, 270,000 high school students across Afghanistan are expected to register to take the Kankor exam, the national university entrance exam. The MoHE and USWDP are ensuring that the process is fairer and more transparent.



High school students gather at KPU to register for the 2017 Kankor exam

Over the last several years, the Kankor exam process has been increasingly beleaguered by instances of fraud including leaked copies of exams and proxy exam taking. USWDP is providing technical and financial support to improve the accountability, security, and efficiency of the Kankor exam from the production of test question booklets to the advanced enrollment and registration of exam takers. In October 2015, heavy duty printers to produce randomized test question booklets and scanners to score the marked exams were provided by USWDP. In late 2016, USWDP delivered portable biometric kits including laptops and printers to be used for this year's exam registration. The new biometric equipment adds a multi-level verification process to registration and attendance, ensuring that only those students that registered for the Kankor

process may present to take the exam. Each registrant's photograph and fingerprints are recorded as proof of their identity, which is checked when they return on the exam date. The Ministry of Higher Education, Dr. Farida Momand inaugurated the new equipment at a ceremony held at Kabul Polytechnic University. The inauguration ceremony also was attended by Kankor Director General Ahmad Jawed Rasuli, Chief Advisor to the President Rafiodin Malikzay, and other Afghan government officials. In the hours following the ceremony, more than 1,300 Kabul area high school students enrolled for the Kankor exam using the new equipment. To date, more than 43,000 students in Kabul province have registered for the 2017 Kankor exam. Thousands more students in other provinces will register in the coming weeks.

5

Afghan and U.S. Universities Align Graduate Degree Programs to Workforce Needs

Afghan provincial universities and U.S. partner universities met to enhance the quality and market orientation of several new master degree programs through curriculum revision and improved teaching pedagogies.

Faculty members from five of the nine university partnerships developing graduate degree programs in Afghanistan met at various times from January to March to ensure that new degree programs are being developed with a focus on high quality and market orientation. Due to ongoing security concerns in the provinces, several of these meetings took place at host institutions in India.

Kabul Polytechnic University and University of Nebraska Omaha faculty members met in New Delhi, India to review progress toward improving the existing master's degree in Hydraulics and Hydro-Technical Structures. The focus of this partnership is to improve the curriculum and identify pedagogical strategies to improve the ability of Afghan graduates to transfer the knowledge and skills they acquire in the program to the market.

Teaching faculty from Kabul University's Faculty of Economics met in New Delhi with faculty members from Ball State University. The teams discussed ongoing efforts to improve the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) course content. The meetings also provided a forum for targeted professional development prior to the start of the MBA program's third term in March 2017.

For Balkh University and Herat University, meetings in Mumbai were an opportunity for



Balkh University and Notre Dame faculty members completing their first meeting together

faculty members to work with their partner universities to identify and review the needs of their new degree programs. Balkh University and University of Notre Dame faculty members met to examine the quality of course materials for the new master's degree in Finance and Accounting at Balkh University, focusing also on teaching pedagogies specific to the program. Since their meeting, faculty members continue to collaborate, long-distance in preparation for the start of the program. Herat University and Denver University met to begin developing a master's degree in Business Administration that addresses both unique local and national market needs.

Nangarhar University and Kentucky University held a second meeting in New Delhi to prepare for the April launch of the master's degree in Business Administration at Nangarhar University. The focus of the meeting was to review course content, especially for the first term, and to map out future program needs.

These meetings represent important steps toward reinvigorating graduate education in Afghanistan. The connection between Afghan and U.S. universities to establish market-oriented degrees has been owned and actively led by Afghan faculty members—a critical piece of having high quality, sustainable graduate degree programs.

6

MoHE Studies French Model for Enhancing Graduate Education in Afghanistan

MoHE High Commission on Master and PhD Programs members visit the Collège de Paris to continue efforts to improve the design, implementation and monitoring of quality of graduate programs at Afghan public and private universities.



HCOMP members during their professional exchange in France hosted by the Collège de Paris

As part of its ongoing support to the work of the MoHE's High Commission on Organization of Master and PhD Programs (HCOMP), USWDP arranged a professional exchange visit in late February and early March to France for HCOMP members. Hosted by the Collège de Paris, the program helped to broaden the members' perspectives on the quality assessment and evaluation of graduate programs as well as the relevance of graduate education to the needs of Afghan society. The host developed a strong program of workshops and site visits that provided a comprehensive overview on how skills-based and relevant graduate education are developed, regulated and evaluated in France. The site visits included the French Ministry of Labor, which monitors vocational programs, the Higher Council for Evaluation and Research and Higher Education, which

assess all graduate programs, leading private institutions responsible for connecting student learning to their employability. The members also visited advanced online learning programs that emphasize an outcome-based learning approach. HCOMP members gained exposure to a new approach to graduate education assessment and began applying the new knowledge and methodologies to develop strategies for assessing more effectively the quality of graduate education at Afghan universities. At the end of the exchange visit, HCOMP members expressed their deep appreciation and acknowledgment of the importance of bringing innovation to the current system in place in Afghanistan. They were especially appreciative of the importance of linkages between public and private stakeholders in providing a relevant and demand-driven graduate education.

7

Program Commitment on International Women's Day

USWDP celebrated International Women's Day and recommitted itself to promoting gender equity throughout higher education.

USWDP leadership and staff members joined forces on March 8, International Women's Day, and pledged to take bold actions in support of women's education. Acting Chief of Party Lawrence Goldman announced that the project had made a formal request to USAID to approve additional scholarships for female university students to complete associate and master degree programs supported by USWDP. Recognizing the significant barriers which discrimination and harassment pose to females in higher education as students, faculty member, and administrators, USWDP Gender Advisor Friba Qurashi pledged to continue her support to the Ministry of Higher Education in its implementation of the "Nondiscrimination and Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy for Higher Education Institutions," beginning at Shaheed Rabbani Education University. Individual staff members also committed themselves to take practical steps in the spirit of championing education including financing their sisters' education and raising their children to support women's rights.



USWDP Gender Advisor Friba Quraishi shows her commitment to champion women's education



Attendees of the Women's Day celebration at USWDP chose one or more #BeBoldForChange pledges on which to act

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