

Article #5

WORKSHOPS ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING HELD WITH BA AGRICULTURE STAFF FROM PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KOSOVO

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During the week of June 12th, 2023, the Private Sector Partnerships to Strengthen Higher Education successfully organized a series of highly informative training workshops titled "Structured Internships in Agriculture." This is a USAID-funded activity implemented by the University of Iowa in partnership with Iowa State University and Kosova Education Center (KEC). These workshops provided valuable insights into internship management procedures, featuring presentations by the esteemed Animal Science Department at Iowa State University (ISU). The event was held at the universities of Prishtina, Prizren, and Peja, and was skillfully led by Christen Burgett, Msc., Associate Teaching Professor and Internship Programs Director for the Animal Science Department at ISU. Assisted by Dr. Curtis Youngs, ME Ensminger Endowed Chair of International Animal Agriculture at ISU, Christen delivered a comprehensive training package that left participants well-informed and engaged in lively discussions.

The attendees comprised professors, experiential learning coordinators, and administrative staff from the Faculties of Agriculture at the partner Universities. The presentations delivered during the workshops provided a comprehensive explanation of how Iowa State University manages agriculture internships, covering various stages from the enrollment of students in the internship course to credits earned, agreement drafting with companies, monitoring, documentation, promotion and the assessment of internship experiences.

The workshops were divided into four sessions: "The What and Why of Internships," "Developing an Internship Program," "Promoting Internships," and "Developing a Course for Internship Credit," which included a case study presentation on the ISU Animal Science Internship - Graded Experience. The presentations were engaging, encouraging participants to share their thoughts on how ISU's practices could be adapted for their universities.

Attendees expressed their excitement about the informative and inspirational workshops that expanded their knowledge of useful systems and procedures for enhanced experiential learning for students. They saw the workshops as an opportunity to enhance their universities' efforts in providing students with better, more structured, and strategic internship opportunities in agriculture.

"I found the workshop to be incredibly informative and relevant. The way Iowa State University prioritizes internships and utilizes creative approaches to provide students with highly educational and career-shaping experiences is truly remarkable. It has inspired us to take action within our own faculty too.

Hopefully, we will manage to secure more dedicated staff members to coordinate internship programs and incorporate some of the excellent practices presented by Ms. Burgett. Those practices will surely help us improve our support for students by helping them establish clear and beneficial job descriptions and contracts with companies. Additionally, we could also highly benefit by implementing similarly stringent documentation requirements for students, encourage research investigations during internships to enhance their field research skills, and promote the presentation of their experiences to their peers. We are determined to make these improvements and offer our students similar valuable opportunities. Xhavit Ramadani Prof. Asoc. Dr., Head of Department of Food Technology with Biotechnology, Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary, University of Prishtina



"The workshop was incredibly insightful, expanding our understanding of proven practices to enhance internship opportunities for students in our Life and Environmental Science Faculty at the University of Prizren. Witnessing the impactful work of professors and experiential learning coordinators at Iowa State University was truly inspiring. Although Kosovo lacks a similar experiential learning culture, we are determined to drive change and foster greater collaboration with businesses. Our goal is to establish highly beneficial internships for both our students and participating companies. " - Albana Milaimi, Dean of Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences



"The workshop served as a valuable platform to raise awareness among professors about the critical significance of actively monitoring student progress throughout their

internship experiences. In Kosovo, fostering increased engagement from students and teachers alike is crucial in enabling experiential learning, a very important step towards students' career development. Personally, I found the tips provided intriguing, as they focused on effectively attracting and informing businesses to collaborate with us in providing internship opportunities and monitoring intern progress together." - Thelleza Latifi, Associate Professor at the University of Peja, Faculty of Management, Tourism, and Environment.



The participants eagerly anticipate upcoming activities and workshops as part of the four-year project, which aims to support their efforts in offering and managing improved internship opportunities for their students. They acknowledged the increasing importance of experiential learning in today's rapidly changing job market, which offers numerous career paths for students to choose from. The participants agreed that prioritizing students' access to high-quality internship opportunities is crucial for helping them gain clarity in their professional aspirations and establish valuable relationships with potential employers in the industry.