

## Article #9

# UNIVERSITY OF IOWA SUPPORTS INDUSTRIAL BOARDS AT KOSOVAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

## To Foster Academic-Industry Collaboration for Future Success

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For more photos on this article go to this link:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ZALHz0bHQ-7QIOtB9MaXKQf6iokXjL2A>

In the pursuit of strengthening higher education and promoting meaningful academia-industry partnerships, the USAID-funded Private Sector Partnerships to Strengthen Higher Education activity joins forces with three public universities in Kosovo to engage and empower Industrial Boards for the 2023-2024 academic year. Private Sector Partnerships to Strengthen Higher Education is a USAID-funded activity implemented by the University of Iowa in partnership with Iowa State University and Kosova Education Center (KEC).

Industrial Board meetings, organized by faculty administrative teams, take place several times annually and serve as a bridge between academia and industry, inviting workforce representatives to provide essential insights into the university's role in preparing students for the job market. This collaboration results in a mutually beneficial scenario: private sector leaders share the competencies and skills required of their future employees who graduate from these institutions and universities adapt their curricula, teaching methods, and services to produce graduates that embody those competencies and skills.



*Figure 1: Board Members tour the Institute for Agriculture Development, hosting the University of Prishtina's Faculty of Agriculture and Animal Sciences Industrial Board meeting.*

To date, the project has supported the Industrial Board meetings for both the agriculture and information, communications, and technology (ICT) sectors in September and October 2023.

The project team from the University of Iowa has worked closely with faculty deans and university career centers of partner universities to facilitate these meetings. These gatherings served as a platform to coordinate future collaboration and to solidify commitment from participating business representatives. Many private sector companies have volunteered to host future meetings, fostering an atmosphere of collaboration and shared responsibility. In fact, while the inaugural Industrial Board meetings for 2023 took place at university campuses, several of the subsequent October meetings were hosted by external guest companies.

In the statements below, some of recent Industrial Board Meeting attendees express their hopes and encourage fellow companies and organizations to join them in these collaborative efforts to drive development for their respective sectors:

*“As our organization aims to strengthen the ICT sector and foster opportunities for growth in this field, we have consistently strived to support public universities’ industrial boards and faculties within the ICT sector. With the added support from the Iowa Consortium this year and UP’s demonstrated commitment to take things to the next level with industrial boards, I am optimistic that we will have more impact in shaping essential study programs and career development opportunities for ICT students in Kosovo. I strongly encourage more private sector partners to participate in our upcoming industrial board meetings, and I cannot emphasize enough the significant impact that collaboration will have in fostering success for both students and companies.” - Vjollca Cavolli, Executive Director at Kosovo ICT Association, STIKK*



Figure 2: Industrial Board Meeting for the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the University of Prishtina. The meeting was hosted by board member: STIKK (Kosova ICT Association at Prishtina Tech Park)

*“I’m delighted to be a part of the Industrial Board for the Agribusiness Faculty at the University of Peja. It’s truly rewarding to have the opportunity to contribute to the design and delivery of education for our future employees and agricultural professionals. It’s inspiring to witness the collaborative efforts between the private sector and public universities in Prishtina, Peja, and Prizren as they join forces and synergize to support one another, all for the greater benefit of production and agriculture opportunities in Kosovo. I am hopeful that more businesses will recognize the significance of these board meetings and actively contribute their valuable insights in our future gatherings.” - Valentina Lajqi, Boost Berries Quality Manager*



*Figure 3: Industrial Meeting held at the Faculty of Agrobusiness, University of Peja*

These Industrial Board meetings are valuable opportunities to present and garner feedback on the wide array of activities that USAID and the Iowa Consortium, made up of the University of Iowa, Iowa State University, and the Kosova Education Center (KEC), has designed to bolster selected public universities through this project. The scope of collaboration in these meetings encompasses data-driven decision making, curriculum reform, experiential learning opportunities, and applied research initiatives. This collaborative endeavor, which brings together universities, the private sector, and international development initiatives, is a testament to the dedication of all involved to empower students with the essential skills, knowledge, and experiences required to thrive in the constantly evolving job market.