

Partners for CHANGE

Educators from North Africa and Northwest Ohio Join Efforts to Promote Journalism Future

BGSU School of Communication Studies director Oliver Boyd-Barrett meets at the University of Manouba with IPSI professor Hamida El Bour and University president Slaheddine Gherissi.



Director of IPSI Mohamed Hamdane, left, and BGSU professor Catherine Cassara, right, show the donated book collection to Patricia Kabra, educational and cultural counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Tunis.



Lunch break during a reporting trip to Nabeul gives BGSU students Stephanie Guigou, left, and Josh Comer, right, a chance to get to know IPSI student Saida Bouslahi.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

For two years educators from Northwest Ohio and North Africa have been working together to enhance journalism education in Tunisia.

The cooperation between the faculty from the School of Communication Studies at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) and L'Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information (IPSI), Université de la Manouba in Tunis, has been funded by a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative in cooperation with Higher Education for Development and United States Agency for International Development.

By the end of the program, BGSU's commitments of time, money and resources will reach twice the federal funding.

The program has involved hands-on journalism workshops for IPSI students, teaching workshops for IPSI and an intensive 3-week seminar at BGSU for students from both universities.

EDUCATIONAL MILESTONES

The IPSI and BGSU professors have been working with the successor generation of journalists being trained at IPSI — young people who will become the journalism professionals of the future in Tunisia, other North African countries and the Middle East.

The curriculum builds on the already solid education the students are receiving at IPSI to emphasize the importance of responsible reporting of key public issues — particularly issues relating to women, the environment and the power of information technology to aid development.

One of the most important outcomes of the program is the power of the educational activities to promote cultural awareness and professional exchange. Students and faculty at both institutions have noted the manner in which program activities have shattered their preconceptions about people and cultures of other countries.

Additionally, BGSU has provided IPSI students and faculty with access to state of the art online information and data resources through BGSU's library and the OhioLINK library network.

Participants note that this program **“shattered preconceptions about people and cultures of other countries.”**



IPSI
L'Institut de Presse et des Sciences de l'Information
Université de la Manouba
Tunis, Tunisie



BGSU
school of communication studies
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM
Bowling Green State University

Program **RESULTS**

Photo courtesy of BGSU



IPSI faculty and students (shown on monitor) "meet" BGSU faculty and administrators for the first time during the kick-off video conference, made possible by the U.S. Embassy in Tunis.

Educational Activities Supported by the Grant

SKILLS TRAINING IN TUNIS

Before the United Nations held its World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunisia in November 2005, BGSU faculty worked with two groups of IPSI students on news reporting, balanced coverage of international news, and coverage of human rights. Discussions stretched the students' thinking about Internet and global communication.

A number of the students from the workshop later worked as volunteers at the UN World Summit itself.

BGSU SEMINAR ON WOMEN, DEMOCRACY AND MEDIA

In summer 2005, ten students and two faculty from IPSI traveled to BGSU for an innovative, intensive workshop with BGSU faculty and students from the U.S., China and Russia.

Four additional U.S. professors interacted with the students, who all earned three hours of credit for their work. IPSI students had the opportunity to meet journalists at regional media organizations, and interviewed Arab American newspaper editors at the *Arab American Press* and the *Forum and Link*.

IPSI PEER MENTOR PROGRAM

IPSI students who completed the summer workshops at BGSU have continued to interact with IPSI and BGSU students. Several assisted at the November 2005 workshop and in the *Frontera* program, which provided an opportunity for IPSI and BGSU students to engage in online dialogue and collaborative research on international and online media.

DIGITAL VIDEO CONFERENCING

BGSU administrators and faculty "met" their Tunisian counterparts along with a large contingent of IPSI students through a video-conference made possible through the facilities of WBGU PBS TV in Ohio and the U.S. Embassy in Tunis. Other videoconferences will allow student-to-student and researcher-to-researcher discussions, as ongoing research projects are already in process.



IPSI faculty and students meet with BGSU faculty during a workshop session in Tunisia in March 2005.



BGSU professor Laura Lengel and a group of IPSI students show off some of the small gifts handed over to Tunisian students and staff.



IPSI student Mehdi Ben Hamza, BGSU professors Catherine Cassara and Laura Lengel, and James Miller, director of the Center for Magreb Studies in Tunis at the UN WSIS.



BGSU graduate student Michelle Cordone, middle, works with her Tunisian counterparts Imen Balegi and Mehdi Ben Hamza during a summer workshop in Ohio in 2005.



BGSU professor Laura Lengel works on internet researching skills with IPSI students Lotfi Ben Khalifa and Najet Mlaiki in an IPSI computer lab.

Spin-offs from the Partnership

Collaboration, Exchange and Enrichment

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE BOOK DONATIONS

One outgrowth of the BGSU-IPSI partnership is Books for the Enhancement of Arab Media and Education (BEAME). The BGSU community has contributed hundreds of textbooks, trade books and scholarly journals to Tunisia; of those so far more than 500 items have been sent for inclusion in the IPSI library. Discussions are underway to expand the program to other universities and libraries in the Middle East and North Africa.

NEW APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

After exposure to the "Women, Media and Democracy" workshop at BGSU and the manner in which it was taught, the participating Tunisian faculty asked that their BGSU partners meet with IPSI faculty to enrich teaching approaches. With the approval of the director of IPSI, BGSU professors met in several sessions with IPSI faculty. Those sessions addressed the use of myBGSU and OhioLINK online facilities, creation of new curricula and the development of effective teaching styles, tools for class management and more active learning techniques.

ATTENTION TO TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES

Partnership students in both Ohio and Tunisia explored the digital divide while reporting on the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society. While the issue was addressed in broad terms, BGSU students also learned about the digital divide first hand while communicating with their Tunisian counterparts. IPSI administration is addressing these challenges, and the May 2006 visit by BGSU faculty and administration to IPSI revealed that there is ongoing improvement to student computer access on the campus.

FULBRIGHT SCHOLARS

An additional competitive grant from the Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence program brought Tunisian Partnership Co-Director, Dr. Fatma Azouz, to BGSU to teach courses in International Communication and Women, Media and the Arab World during the 2005-06 year. Applications for other Fulbright scholarships are on the horizon to send BGSU professors to Tunis and bring IPSI faculty to Northwest Ohio.



BGSU donations have vastly expanded the English-language holdings of the IPSI library, displayed in the foyer of the Tunisian institute.



BGSU associate dean Bruce Edwards talks with IPSI faculty members during a training workshop for IPSI faculty in March 2005.



Professors Catherine Cassara and Hamida El Bour consult on the schedule for a November 2005 workshop at IPSI.

FEDERAL GRANT SUPPORT

All of these partnership activities were made possible with support from the U.S. Department of State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) in cooperation with Higher Education for Development and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

ABOUT MEPI

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) was founded by the U.S. Department of State to work with governments and people in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to expand economic, political and educational opportunities. The initiative links MENA, U.S. and global private sector businesses, non-governmental organizations, civil society elements and governments together to develop innovative policies and programs to achieve that mission.

One of the programs funded by MEPI is the U.S.-Middle East Universities Partnership Program linking colleges and universities in the U.S. and the MENA.

For more information about the MEPI Program, please visit www.state.gov/p/nea/rt/mepi.



Partnership Successes Lead to Other Exciting Developments

IPSI STUDENT NEWSPAPER DEVELOPMENT

The partnership between BGSU and IPSI has been extended through an additional MEPI grant to bolster the Tunisian press institute's student newspaper.

With help from the U.S. Embassy in Tunis, IPSI faculty applied for and received an additional MEPI grant to buy computer equipment so that their print students could regularly produce their own newspaper. At MEPI officers' urging, the grant was extended to involve an exchange between IPSI and a U.S. university.

The exchange took BGSU students, the director of student publications and a professor to Tunis to work with the IPSI newspaper staff on newspaper management and news gathering skills.

Tunisian faculty and students traveled to BGSU to observe an American student newspaper in action and meet with their American counterparts. Along the way, the Tunisian professors were also exposed to American approaches to journalism education.

HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH

During the newspaper visit in the spring, IPSI students went to Rogers High School, an inner-city school in Toledo, to meet with social studies classes. For eight periods they interacted with multiple classes of American students. The result was an exciting experience of learning and cultural exchange for both sides of the encounter.

In addition to their social studies appearances, the Tunisian students met with Arab speaking students studying at Rogers and also with the student newspaper advisor and her staff.

RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE AS PATHS TO DEVELOPMENT

Partnership faculty from Ohio and Tunisia crafted common goals, objectives and program milestones, such as skills building workshops at IPSI and at BGSU, to address concerns expressed early on by the IPSI faculty. As a result of the collaboration's successes, faculty and administrators at both universities have a renewed commitment to continuing collaboration beyond the end of the MEPI grant.

Tunisian students are attending the master's program at BGSU and other students plan to apply. Plans are in the works to create exchanges that will take BGSU undergrads to Tunisia.

Researchers at both universities are developing an applied research agenda focused on vital questions, such as the role the media in both countries place in generating inaccurate stereotypes of the residents of the U.S. and the Middle East and North Africa.

Extensive efforts have been devoted to sustain the partnership in the future. The partnership co-directors have applied for new sources of funding to support additional programs between both institutions, which in the future may provide opportunities for faculty and students from other Middle East and North African countries to participate.

Future efforts will focus both on professional skills development for undergraduate and graduate students and on cultural exchange for students and faculty in both the U.S. and Middle East and North Africa.



Tunisian students Mohamed Aziz Ben Ameer and Hajer Mokni meet with social studies students at Rogers High School in Toledo.



BGSU students Joshua Comer and Stephanie Guigou, center, spent time at IPSI in November 2005 working with the IPSI student newspaper staff along with BGSU Director of Student Publications Robert Bortel and BGSU print professor, Catherine Cassara.



IPSI students ham it up for the camera during their stay on the BGSU campus for a 3-week summer workshop in 2005.

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