

Civic Engagement, Teaching Methodology and Research Techniques, Omaha Nebraska

April 29-May 17, 2018

Program Objectives

The UNO-Pakistan Universities Academic Linkages Project supports the United States' public diplomacy program in Pakistan. This project will provide junior faculty members at Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU), Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women's University (SBBWU), and Baluchistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (BUIITEMS) an opportunity to learn from faculty and staff at the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO).

UNO-Pakistan Universities Academic Linkages Program is to build enduring and self-sustaining connections among UNO, QAU, SBBWU and BUIITEMS universities, expand the knowledge and capacity of these Pakistani institutions, and strengthen public diplomacy and relations between the US and Pakistan through shared values and interests.



The project aims to provide participants with a quality academic exchange experience that will strengthen mutual understanding and people-to-people ties among all US and Pakistani participants and build long-term self-sustaining relationships and institutional linkages between US and Pakistani institutions.



As a part of this program, the first Cohort comprising fifteen junior professors visited University of Nebraska Omaha from April 29 to May 17, 2018. These professors come from different disciplines which included: Anthropology, Business and Economics, Psychology, History, Engineering and Political Sciences. The program has two components: (1) academic component, and (2) cultural component. In the course of three weeks, participants were exposed to US pedagogical philosophy and practice and cultural experiences that help enrich and reinforce their academic areas.



Academic Component: The UNO-Pakistan Universities Academic Linkages Program helped bring to young Pakistani faculty the opportunity to learn about the US, participate in university coursework that would serve them in their academic and professional careers, and foster mutual understanding between the US and Pakistan. The academic component aimed to:

1. To improve participants' understanding of civic engagement in the US and how to model these practices in their home communities
2. To expose participants to US standards of higher education, pedagogical methodology, and practice for teaching the discipline
- 3) To provide participants opportunities to team with American peers in their field, refine their individual research projects and create joint research projects with UNO faculty mentors.

As such, participants attended lectures on Teaching Diverse Learners, Planning for Learning, Public Speaking, Teaching Technology, and Conflict Resolution in Education, Intercultural Communication, Research Skills, Leadership and so forth. In the last two days of the program, participants were assigned to lecture on their desired topic using the new pedagogical practices they acquired at UNO. Each participant was also designated a mentor based on his/her area of research.

In addition, participants had the opportunity to meet UNO administrators, including Dr. B.J. Reed, the Senior Vice Chancellor, on best practices in US educational administration. After having a series of lectures and a tour of Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center (CEC) located at UNO, participants were impressed as how CEC contributes positively and measurably to the community's quality of life by creating, supporting, and expanding mutually beneficial partnerships, engaged scholarship, and academic and student programming.



Cultural Program: The cultural component provided participants first-hand experiences with the lessons learned in academic classes. Participants had the opportunities to experience Midwest American culture, see many of Omaha’s hallmarks, learn about local history, and watch civic engagement in action in the Omaha community. Participants were taken on a tour of Oakland City, rural countryside in Burt County, Nebraska. They visited churches, the popular Swedish museum, farms, community businesses, and school. Later, they were invited by a host family for lunch and cultural exchange talk. Participants also visited Fork Atkinson State Historical Park, The Durham Museum, and Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium. Most importantly, participants enjoyed visiting the Nebraska State Capitol at Lincoln which highlights the Progressive Era ideas—such as the unicameral government, nonpartisan local and state elections, and public-private partnerships—that has influenced Nebraska history, during the course of their stay in Omaha.



Participants also visited the Malcolm X Foundation in North Omaha that exemplifies the diversity represented in the local Omaha community, as well as the fight for civil rights nationwide led by a Muslim leader born in Omaha. Similarly, participants toured the world-renowned Tri-faith Campus that co-locates a church, synagogue and mosque on one site along with a fourth building called “Abraham’s Tent”, dedicated to interfaith dialogue that demonstrates religious freedom and peaceful coexistence in the US.

Participants met American citizens from diverse backgrounds, interact with American peers, and speak to academic and civic groups about their experiences and life in their home countries. Omaha is representative of the diversity of American political, social, and cultural life and encompasses differences including ethnicity, race, gender, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, and disabilities. Through field trips and cultural events, the program revealed aspects of US civic engagement, education principles, and race relations that together form the tapestry of American life.

Follow On: Upon return to their home country, UNO will work with participants to implement individual and joint research projects, assist with curriculum development and US pedagogical techniques, further their understanding of civic engagement in the US, and foster shared dialogue and bilateral cooperation. Through scheduled teleconferences, online individualized coaching, and shared material on the dedicated UNO-Pakistan website and other social media sites, Project Directors and faculty mentors will maintain close contact with participants, monitor and survey their teaching and research activities, and assess impact on their institutions, scholars, faculty and students.

In November of 2018, UNO faculty mentors will visit QAU for a seven-day workshop that will include all participants from QAU, SBBWU and BUITEMS who took part in the exchange. This session will explore in further detail the overarching focus of research, teaching, and civic engagement and how developing these areas will enhance institutional capacity, public diplomacy, people-to-people ties, and mutual understanding among US and Pakistani citizens. UNO will update year two follow-on programming based on year one assessment and evaluations.



