

PFDP National Roundtables on Higher Education in Palestine

Roundtable Four

Quality Assurance in Distance Education

December 3-4, 2011

Caesar Hotel
Rome I and Rome II
Ramallah

Background

Distance learning, defined in its most basic form, is a formal education process in which the teacher and the student are not located in the same place. It may employ correspondence study, or audio, video, or computer technologies to convey the idea of *anytime, anywhere learning*.¹ PFDP's fourth National Roundtable on Higher Education in Palestine will focus on two modalities of distance education, e-learning and blended learning, as highly useful—but significantly under developed—elements of Palestine's higher education system.

The Great Potential for Palestine

E-learning and blended learning programs are increasingly common and successful at most strong universities around the world: they expand access to quality higher education for new groups of qualified students; they enhance the quality and creativity of instruction in traditional courses and programs; and they dramatically expand opportunities for faculty members and students to work across local or national boundaries in pursuit of advanced degrees or collaborative research projects. They can also promote greater collaboration among Palestine's universities and encourage the sharing of academic resources—making it possible for students from any region to benefit from the programs located anywhere from Jenin and Ramallah to Bethlehem, Hebron and Gaza.

There is already an extensive array of courses and programs in place at Al Quds Open University which has the greatest investment and experience in the various forms of e-learning and blended learning. There are, as well, more limited specialized activities involving specific courses offered—some on an experimental basis—by individual universities. And, to an increasing extent, Palestinian universities have been approached by well respected and long-established universities in the USA or Europe that have a strong interest in creating partnerships with Palestinian universities to offer—again, using various forms of e-learning or blended learning education—their own fully accredited graduate degrees or even joint degrees in collaboration with local universities.

This type of creative international partnership is increasingly common among the world's best universities. Such linkages have great potential to link Palestine's faculty and students with exciting new opportunities abroad without the limitations in mobility that impede the ability of Palestine's faculty and students to play a full and active role as members of the world's academic community. Moreover, universities in Palestine could

¹ *A Guide to Ensure Quality Distance Learning*, University of West Florida 2004 (2009); uwf.edu/atc/AboutUs/DistanceLearningGuide.pdf

themselves develop interesting new courses and programs that could be offered to other universities around the world, thus forging new relationships and opening up opportunities to tap into new sources of income and support.

A New Policy Environment in Palestine

The Education Development Strategic Plan: 2008-2012 (EDSP) of Palestine's Ministry of Education and Higher Education identifies the introduction of *new modes and approaches to teaching (e.g. ICT, e-learning, blended learning) especially in post-secondary education* as a priority for enhancing the quality of higher education.² Now, to provide a framework and impetus for the development of expanded distance learning initiatives in Palestine, the Ministry has prepared a comprehensive new by-law that will open a new chapter in the development of distance learning at Palestine's universities. The new by-law—soon to be given final approval by the Minister and the Cabinet—provides a clear legal and regulatory framework for innovative and high quality use of e-learning and blended learning at every level of higher education.

The new by-law requires the creation at each university of a quality assurance unit to control the quality and standards of distance learning and open education at every university. This strong emphasis on quality assurance addresses a chronic perception—in Palestine and elsewhere—that e-learning and blended learning are not of the same quality as courses or programs taught in more traditional ways. Using the new by-law and other widely accepted quality assurance systems such as those adopted by the prestigious Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C), the Roundtable will explore these issues as a way to guide the further development and operation of the quality assurance units for online and blended learning at Palestinian universities.

The Roundtable

Representatives of the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission will come together with faculty and administrators of Palestine's universities as well as with two senior representatives of the Sloan Consortium, Penn State University (by video conference) and Northwestern University (by video conference). Together, they will explore various approaches to quality assurance employed at several different universities around the world and discuss how these might be useful in the Palestinian context. They will also provide examples of e-learning or blended programs that have successfully demonstrated their conformity to the very highest standards of quality.

It is PFDP's hope that these discussions will advance the cause of high quality e-learning and blended learning at Palestine's universities as they enter an exciting new phase of development in these important areas. The ultimate goal, of course, is for universities in Palestine to design e-learning and blended learning courses and programs that are *equal to or better than* their corresponding traditional courses and programs.

² *Education Development Strategic Plan*, Ministry of Education and Higher Education (July, 2008) p. 63.

Program

Saturday, December 3, 2011

**Caesar Hotel
Rome I and Rome II**

Introductions and Welcome

9:00 am -9:30 am

**Dr. John W. Shumaker
Chief of Party
PFDP**

Session 1

9:30 am- 10: 30 am

**Dr. Mohammed Al Subu
Director, Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission
Ministry of Education and Higher Education**

Defining the Issues for Palestine

Dr. Subu will discuss the new context, framework and standards for distance education that result from the new by-law on distance education soon to be officially adopted by the Minister and the Cabinet. The new by-law should stimulate the development of new and creative distance education initiatives by universities in Palestine and open up opportunities for dynamic new partnerships with strong international universities.

10:30 am-11:00 am

Break

Session 2

11:00-12:30

**Dr. A Frank Mayadas
Founder
The Sloan Consortium
(Sloan-C)**

ONLINE EDUCATION TODAY: PROMISE AND OUTCOMES

Dr. Mayadas will summarize different aspects of the current status of online education in the United States, and to some extent internationally. He will start by describing the early reasons for excitement about this approach to distance education, and then move to outlining what has actually been accomplished, where things stand today, and the challenges going forward.

Included will be a discussion of the most recent data on total enrollments and growth rates in online education. Dr. Mayadas will, however, address more qualitative topics such as acceptance of online as a form of quality education, the adoption of online as an integral part of strategic planning among US institutions, the penetration of online education and training into workforce and corporate applications, and perceived obstacles to continued growth towards truly large scale.

Dr. Mayadas will also discuss the status of blended education (online integrated with face-to-face classes) to provide as comprehensive a picture as is possible. As a wrap-up, he will put forward some ideas to improve international collaboration in this, the fastest-growing segment of higher education.

12:30 pm-1:30 pm

Lunch

Session 3

1:30 pm-2:30 pm

Distance Learning Strategies and Initiatives and Palestinian Universities

Moderator

Dr. John W. Shumaker

PFDP

Dr. Maher Natsheh,
Vice President for Academic Affairs
An-Najah University

Dr. Sufian Kamal
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Al Quds Open University

Dr. Abdel Aziz A. Shawabkeh
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs
Birzeit University

2:30 pm-3:00 pm

Break

Session 4

3:00 pm-4: 15 pm

Video Conferences

Dr. Larry Ragan
Director, Instructional Design and Development, Continuing and Distance Education
Penn State University

Quality Matters

Dr. John Bourne
Executive Director
The Sloan Consortium

*The Sloan-C Quality Scorecard
And
Programs and Services of the Sloan Consortium:
Possibilities for Palestine*

Session 5

4:30pm-5:45pm

Video Conference

**Dean Thomas Gibbons
School of Continuing Studies
Northwestern University**

***Northwestern University's Online Masters in Public Administration
A Proposal for Palestine***

Joined by

**Joel Shapiro, Associate Dean of Academics, School of Continuing Studies
Frank Tomsic, Director of Distance Education, School of Continuing Studies**

Dean Gibbons and his colleagues will discuss the online learning strategy of Northwestern University's School of Continuing Studies (SCS), its positioning within the US and international marketplace, and provide a description of its online Masters Program in Public Policy and Administration. They will demonstrate one online course (*Analytical Methods for Public Policy*) and demonstrate how technology contributes to the students' educational experience.

They will also use the Masters Program as a specific example of one internationally respected online program that Northwestern University proposes for offering in Palestine in conjunction with several universities that have expressed an interest in a graduate program in public administration.

7:00pm

Dinner

Sunday, December 4, 2011

Rome I and Rome II

Session 6

9:00 am -10:45 am

***Faculty Perspective
E-learning and Blended Learning:
University Projects and Issues***

Moderator

**Dr. Saida Affouneh
Faculty of Education
Al Quds Open University**

**Dr. Maher Hashweh
Dean, Faculty of Education
Birzeit University**

Dr. Nabil M. Hasasneh
Dean of the College of Science
Hebron University

Mr. Wisam Shamroukh
Director of the IT Center for Excellence
Palestine Polytechnic University

10:45am-11:15pm
Break

Session 6
11:15am -12:00 pm

Discussion
A Way Forward: Strategies and Policies

Dr. Mohammed Al Subu'
Dr. A. Frank Mayadas
Dr. John W. Shumaker

12:00 pm-12:30 pm
Evaluation

12:30 pm

Lunch and Departure

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Palestinian Faculty Development Program**

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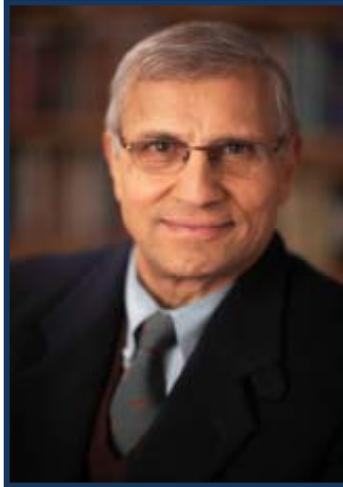
Featured Speakers



Dr. Mohammed Al Subu'

Mohammed Alsubu' was born in Jenin, Palestine. He attended Jenin High School and received his university degrees; Bachelor & Master of *Science* in Chemistry at the University of Jordan, Amman, and PhD in Chemistry at the University of Florida, USA. Being a professor in Higher Education for over 30 years, Mohammed has published over 40 research papers and books in quality assurance of higher education and several disciplines.

In 2006, Dr. Alsubu' became the head of Accreditation & Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC) of the Ministry of Education & Higher Education. He has participated in a number of national and international conferences/workshops in the field of education quality assurance, and he is a member of several national and international associations.



Dr. A Frank Mayadas

Dr. Frank Mayadas has served as a Senior Advisor to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation since 2010, advising the Foundation on its continuing grants in the Anytime, Anyplace Learning Program. From 1992 to 2009, he served as a Program Director at the Foundation, helping craft the Foundation's grant making strategy in online learning, globalization, industry studies, and career choice in technical fields. He currently oversees the Sloan Foundation's program in Any Time, Any Place Learning.

Prior to coming to the Sloan Foundation, Dr. Mayadas spent 27 years at the IBM Corporation. He was Vice President, Research Division, Technical Plans and Controls from 1991 to 1992; Vice President, Technology and Solutions Development, Application Solutions Line of Business, from 1989 to 1991; General Manager, University and College Systems, IBM Personal Systems Line of Business, from 1988 to 1989; Secretary of IBM's Corporate Management Board and the IBM Management Committee, from 1987 to 1988; and the IBM Management Committee, from 1987 to 1988; IBM Research Division Vice President and Director, Almaden Research Center, San Jose, California from 1983 to 1987; and an IBM Research Division Director, Technical Planning and Controls, from 1981 to 1983.

Dr. Mayadas received a Ph.D. in Applied Physics from Cornell in 1965, and a B.S. from the Colorado School of Mines in 1961.

He has more than 35 published papers in Systems, Devices, and Solid State Physics, and holds several patents and awards from IBM. He is a fellow of the IEEE, a member of the American Physical Society, and a past Director of the Society of Engineering Science. He has served as a member of the National Advisory Board for Georgia Tech, and the Advisory Board of the College of Engineering, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He is currently a member of the Advisory Board for the College of Engineering of the University of Florida.



Dr. Larry Ragan

Dr. Larry Ragan received his B.s, M. Ed and PhD in Instructional Systems from Penn State University. He directs the design and development of a wide range of faculty development services and systems for Penn State's Academic Outreach. Academic Outreach serves learners via online (the World Campus), Continuing Education, and the video learning network. Dr. Ragan designs and delivers professional development programs, establishes a faculty development learning community, and conducts research including the articulation of strategies to help faculty manage the online workload (SMOW) and the definition of competencies for online teaching success (COTS). He has served in leadership roles as co-director of the EDUCAUSE Learning Technology Leadership program (2005-2006), and currently co-director of the PSU/Sloan-C Institute for Emerging Leadership in Online Learning.



Dr. John Bourne

John Bourne is Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Emeritus, at Olin College, Professor of Technology Entrepreneurship, Emeritus, at Babson College, and is the Executive Director of the Sloan Consortium. He received a BE from Vanderbilt University and MS and PhD from the University of Florida. He was previously Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Professor of Biomedical Engineering at Vanderbilt University, where he had been on the faculty since 1969. In 2000, Bourne became a Founding faculty member of the Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering in Needham, Ma. and Director of the Sloan Center for Online Education. He founded the Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN) in 1996 and remains as editor. He also served as Editor-in-Chief of the Critical Reviews in Biomedical Engineering for 30 years. He established the Asynchronous Learning Network (ALN) Web in 1996 with support from the Alfred P. Sloan-C Foundation. In 2008, he incorporated the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C) as a non-profit corporation in the state of Massachusetts and is currently the Executive Director of Sloan-C. He is a Fellow of the IEEE, Fellow of American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering and author of numerous articles and books.



Dean Thomas Gibbons

Thomas F. Gibbons is the Dean of the Northwestern University School of Continuing Studies, which offers adult learners a broad array of graduate, undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, certificate and professional development programs. Dean Gibbons launched Northwestern's first fully online master's degree and has since developed many other award-winning distance education academic offerings attended by students throughout the United States and internationally as well. He also oversees a variety of special programs, including the highly-regarded Center for Public Safety, which provides leadership programs globally to senior law enforcement; the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, and Northwestern's Summer Session.

The School of Continuing Studies, founded in 1933 as University College, today offers educational programs to more than 12,500 students annually at its Evanston, Chicago Lake Shore, and Chicago Loop campuses. Dean Gibbons, who is an attorney and holds a senior lecturer appointment at Northwestern's School of Law, teaches courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels in conflict resolution, negotiations and mediation, and has won three Faculty of the Year/Distinguishing Teaching Awards at the University. Prior to his work at Northwestern, Dean Gibbons was a senior administrator/educator with DePaul University's Division of Lifelong Learning in Chicago, IL, and taught at the School for New Learning and the College of Law, where he was the co-founder of the law school's Center for Dispute Resolution.

Dean Gibbons is the President-Elect of the University of Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), whose members includes many of North America's most prestigious public and private degree-granting colleges and universities, international universities, and nonprofit organizations with a significant commitment to professional and continuing higher education. He also sits on the President's Advisory Council of Excelsior College in Albany, NY, and is a member of the University Research Deans Group and the ASG University Deans Group.

Dean Gibbons was a keynote speaker at the PFDP Annual Academic Colloquium held in Ramallah in July, 2011



Dr. John W. Shumaker

Dr. John W. Shumaker is the Chief of Party of the USAID-funded Palestinian Faculty Development Program for AMIDEAST. Dr. Shumaker has served as a leader in education as professor, senior administrator at The Ohio State University and the University at Albany in the SUNY System. He also spent several years as president at Central Connecticut State University, the University of Louisville and the University of Tennessee. Since 2005, he has served as a senior advisor to ministries of education and higher education in Armenia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Morocco in projects funded by the World Bank, DANIDA, USAID, the Government of Saudi Arabia and the private sector in Rabat and Casablanca.

As a university president Dr. Shumaker was highly successful as a fund raiser and specialist in community engagement, change management, international programs and university-industry relationships for teaching as well as advanced research and knowledge transfer. In recognition of his service to the University of Louisville the university presented its highest award—The Minerva Award—in 2002 and subsequently dedicated the John W, Shumaker Research Building on its main campus in November, 2009.

Before coming to Ramallah, Dr. Shumaker served as team lead of an international group of experts responsible for creating a master plan for a new polytechnic university that will be at the center of a new Green City developed by a large industrial corporation north of Marrakech. Prior to his work in Morocco he was team lead of the Tatweer Strategy Formation Project in Saudi Arabia and served as Chief of Party of the USAID-funded Higher Education Commission/Financial Aid Development program in Pakistan for the Academy for Educational Development. This program involved developing a comprehensive financial aid system for higher education in Pakistan, as well as capacity-building for the Higher Education Commission and 11 universities to raise funds from the private sector for scholarships and other financial assistance programs.

His work at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education in Kabul, Afghanistan focused on a range of areas including strategic planning, policy development, quality control, financial aid systems, national university entrance examinations, resource development and fund-raising, as well as capacity development.