

Report

Benghazi International Summer University

Report date
18 July 2012



TITLE

1st Benghazi International Summer University – 2012
'Entrepreneurship for the New Libya'

DATES

24 June – 5 July 2012

PARTNERS

SPARK, University of Benghazi &
University of Benghazi Research and Consulting Centre



University of Benghazi
Research & Consulting Centre



Benghazi International Summer University 2012 – Report

From 24 June to 5 July 2012 the first edition of the Benghazi International Summer University (BISU) took place. Centred on the theme of Entrepreneurship, BISU 2102 offered participants a choice of four intensive two-week courses taught by International Visiting Professors together with professors of the University of Benghazi's Economics Faculty.

The Summer University aimed to familiarize students, graduates and practitioners with current thought and practice in Entrepreneurship, SME Development and (international) Business Management. Additionally BISU 2012 aimed to promote international academic cooperation. As a pilot, it also wanted to help assess demand for Entrepreneurship education in Libya: one of the conclusions is that there is a huge demand for business education and training that currently remains unsatisfied.

Relevance

SPARK has organized Summer Universities since the mid 1990s in South-East Europe, developing them as a key tool to introduce students to fresh knowledge and modern interactive teaching. Summer Universities equally act to promote international exchange and cooperation, create long lasting academic relationships and help kick-start academic reform.

The first edition of the Benghazi International Summer University piloted this tool in Libya in keeping with the University's key objective to play a relevant societal role in the new Libya. The theme of BISU 2012 was jointly agreed between SPARK and the University as one with particular relevance in post-revolution Libya.

Future economic policy in Libya will emphasise private sector development. But while a young population is eager to explore new economic opportunities, entrepreneurship education is all but underdeveloped. BISU 2012 offered participants an early opportunity to familiarize themselves with key concepts and practice in Entrepreneurship and Business Management and help them orient on possible career paths.

Preparations

After first deliberations in February and March, the University of Benghazi and SPARK jointly decided to organise the Summer University sooner rather than later. As a consequence relatively little time was available for preparations: nine weeks between final go-ahead and the start of classes in June.

A call for visiting professors was sent out in late April 2012. Despite the tight deadline, the call immediately generated great interest: more than 100 people requested the *Guide for Visiting Professors*. Thirty-one applied for one of four available positions and submitted course concepts or proposals; selection was finalized on 22 May. Promotion among students in Benghazi commenced on 10 June. The large number of applications (in total more than 150 applications were received), despite the short advertisement time and the relatively limited dissemination, testifies for the large interest.

Participants

BISU 2012 was advertised at the Economics Faculty on the University Campus and at the Research and Consulting Centre - which hosted BISU 2012 - as well as through facebook and direct promotion by local co-professors. BISU 2012 also reached beyond University students and opened to graduates as well as participants active in Benghazi civil society.

BISU 2012 - Quick facts

Courses offered:

- I - Foundations of Entrepreneurship;
- II - Business Strategy;
- III - International Sales and Marketing;
- IV - International Business Management

Visiting Professors from:

Bosnia/Canada
Denmark
France (Monaco)
The Netherlands

Co-Professors from: the University of Benghazi Economics Faculty

Participants:

Applications: >150
Selected: 112 (88 male, 24 female)
Successful: 84 (64 male, 20 female)

Appreciation:

Participants gave high overall ratings to BISU 2012. Ninety-six percent said they would recommend their course to others, ninety-five percent indicated satisfaction with visiting professors.

Participants paid a registration fee of 50 LD (approx €33 or \$42). To avoid narrowing the target group too much, English language knowledge was not a requirement for participation.

Student drop out was minimal (ie. students who stopped coming after the first or first two classes). The no-show rate (registered participants that did not show up at all) was however significant in particular among University students, possible related to the limited time available for students to carefully consider their application.

Successful participants were awarded a certificate, testifying for attendance, active participation and satisfactory completion of assignments.

Courses

BISU 2012 offered four courses in topics related to the Entrepreneurship (see p. 5). Visiting professors were selected on the basis of relevance and complementarity of their course proposals as well as teaching experience.

Courses were co-taught by visiting and co-professors; the task division was decided between them, as were assignments and group work. Active participation and interaction between students and professors was encouraged in all courses. Within limits of feasibility, teaching materials were provided to students in Arabic. Interpreters provided direct (consecutive) interpretation from English to Arabic during classes.

Evaluation

Participants as well as visiting and co-professors were asked their opinions to help evaluate BISU 2012.

Results indicate an overall very high level of satisfaction among participants. The spread from average scores is low, indicating a considerable convergence of opinion of respondents; differences between the courses are relatively small. Notable exceptions concerned the extent to which the language barrier affected the ease of approaching the visiting professors (Q12) and the influence of the lack of specific knowledge of interpreters of the subject matter (Q30), where respondents' opinions diverged more.

Although the results indicate quality and preparation of interpreters deserves particular attention, given the consistently high overall satisfaction with the course, the language barrier is clearly anything but insurmountable. A large majority of respondents indicated that the interpretation provided during classes enabled them to properly follow lectures (Q34).

The questionnaire also asked what participants expected to do in one and five year's time respectively. While there was no outspoken favourite between public, private and non-profit employment, more than half of respondents (42) expected to start their own business. In the autumn of 2012 participate will be



approached for a follow-up survey to assess to what extent they have been able to use the knowledge and skills gained during BISU 2012.

Selected scores from Student Evaluation Questionnaire:

Question	Average*	(Strongly) Agree*
Q 10 Everyone in class could freely speak and give his/her opinion	4,7	90%
Q 12 It was difficult to approach the professor because of the language barrier	3,2	44%
Q 25 On the whole, the quality of the course was high	4,4	86%
Q 31 Participating in BISU 2012 is important for my career and will help me to find better jobs or opportunities for studying abroad	4,6	90%
Q 32 I am satisfied with the classes taught by the visiting professor	4,8	95%
Q 33 I am satisfied with the classes taught by the co-professor	4,6	88%
Q 34 The translation during lectures enabled me to understand the lectures well	4,3	77%

* Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with statements on a 5-point scale: Strongly Disagree – 1 to Strongly Agree – 5. Full results are available on demand. N= 78

Professors

Visiting and co-professors commended participants for their enthusiasm, dedication and positive attitude. Several noted that their knowledge level and participation were above their expectations. All reported a pleasant, dynamic and interactive atmosphere. Visiting professors advised more preparation time, including for preparation and translation of teaching materials. Several co-professors similarly advised greater involvement in course preparations. Finally, visiting professors regretted there were few extra-curricular events.

Lessons & Follow-up

BISU 2012 proved the feasibility of organizing a Summer University at short notice, even in relatively uncharted territory. In addition to the many practical issues that deserve improvement and which would benefit from a longer preparation time, in future editions translators and interpreters should be involved more closely in preparations.

The practical and applied focus of courses has been identified as an important factor: participants are not necessarily interested in deepening their academic understanding, but are eager to learn concepts and skills they can apply in practice. SPARK and the University of Benghazi intend to organize next editions, which may again focus on Entrepreneurship or cover other topics of immediate relevance in Libya. Additionally, SPARK and the University of Benghazi Research & Consulting Centre (RCC) intend to further explore possibilities to offer applied Entrepreneurship and Business Skills Trainings in Benghazi.

Partners

BISU 2012 was organized by Stichting SPARK and the University of Benghazi (UoB). SPARK was responsible for overall programme coordination, and selection and international travel arrangements of visiting professors. The University of Benghazi arranged translation, interpretation and accommodation for visiting professors. The University of Benghazi Research & Consulting Centre coordinated promotion, student selection and local transportation and made an extraordinary effort as host of BISU 2012. Academic matters were jointly dealt with by SPARK, UoB and RCC. An essential contribution was of course made by visiting professors – who taught pro-bono – and co-professors, who took BISU 2012 on top of their demanding daily tasks at the University.

Costs were covered by the University of Benghazi and SPARK.

Course overview

1 - Foundations of Entrepreneurship

International Course Professor: Nermin Zukic, EdD, MBA, Kent State University, US

Course Co-Professor: Prof Abdulfattha Abuhbail, Economics Faculty, University of Benghazi

The course 'Foundations of Entrepreneurship' introduces key concepts of entrepreneurship and the essentials of venture creation and developing an idea into a viable business plan. The aim of the course is to familiarize students with all steps of developing a business concept, strengthen entrepreneurship awareness and stimulate creative initiative. It also explores the importance of cultural factors for Business development.

2 - Business Strategy

International Course Professor: Lars Davidsen, MSc, Aarhus Business Academy, Denmark

Course Co-Professor: Prof Abdallah I Shamia, Economics Faculty, University of Benghazi

The course 'Business Strategy' gives students a focus on new opportunities for setting up a business or developing an existing business, and teaches them about the key elements of a strategic analysis of the internal and external environment. Participants have learnt how to develop a specific business plan.

3 - International Sales and Marketing

International Course Professor: Francis Ille, MBA, International University of Monaco

Course Co-Professor: Prof Saleh Al Mansouri, Economics Faculty, University of Benghazi

This course 'International Sales and Marketing' gives a broad overview of international marketing and sales theory and practices necessary to understand the competing environment prevailing in our globalized economy. After the description of traditional marketing concepts from McCarthy to Kotler, it concentrates on international marketing helps international business emphasizing the role of the international organizations and then focuses on the sales part, which is the indispensable engine to all successful businesses.

4 - International Business Management

International Course Professor: Erik Dirksen MSc, Amsterdam Business School, The Netherlands

Course Co-Professor: Dr Ali Omar, Economics Faculty, University of Benghazi

The course 'International Business Management' introduces concepts of strategic international business management and aims to equip students with the background knowledge and analytical skills to take difficult management decisions in a domestic or transnational business environment. Interactive sessions focus on applying theory of strategic business management in practice.

Contact:

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