

Balkan Institute/ Dartmouth Entrepreneurial Network Exchange program (BEN)

Five young outstanding Kosovar students studied entrepreneurship at Dartmouth



In January, five Kosovars arrived on campus with one mission from their Minister of Trade and Industry: learn about entrepreneurship and take it back to the people of their country. With the leadership of Professor Gregg Fairbrothers '76, Bill Nisen '73, Bill Weschler '78, and Catalina Gorla '09, these students were immersed in a “curriculum” that included classes, projects, meetings with entrepreneurs, visits to incubators, presentations to investors, NH government officials, and DRTC board members. But instead of listing all their activity and accomplishments, we’d rather you’d hear about their experience in their own words:



“DEN and BI program offered me a great deal of help. I liked the fact that we had to meet with very successful alumni and learn business lessons through one-on-one meetings. This program taught me that money is the last thing we have to worry when trying to open a new venture and that in order to get an idea into reality we must focus mostly on people and commitment to objectives.

The person that I enjoyed meeting the most was Gregg Fairbrothers. Considering his rich background as an entrepreneur and as an educator, I learned that things are way more simpler than they appear and that with dedication anything can be achieved.” - Ardi Ponosheci



“Firstly, I felt very lucky to be part of Dartmouth—one of top universities in the world. Working with people there, their experiences, and the way they supported me made me see the world differently. I’m a construction engineer and initially I thought it doesn’t have anything to do with entrepreneurship. Now I know exactly how to think like a young entrepreneur and how to get rid of the risks. As I came back to Kosovo from US, the first thing (after fixing my sleep schedule) I thought was: “Here there are a lot of things I can do.” This is a big lesson I learned from the United States. I want to thank Professor Gregg Fairbrothers, Catalina Gorla, Bill Nisen, and others. I find myself very motivated to start a small company and forward the spirit of entrepreneurship to the youth all around the world.” - Hana Hoxha



“Having the chance to be a part of a great and top College such as Dartmouth College, and particularly to attend the class of Entrepreneurship at Tuck School of Business taught by professor Gregg Fairbrothers, was a dream that became true. Hanover was one of the best journeys of my life. My time there was precious and every minute was worthwhile living and learning there! I was honored to meet many great people there, to learn very important things, and to experience a different culture. From this program I participated in very important entrepreneurship classes. Particularly we met different business leaders who taught in the class every week where we learned more from their personal experiences, failures, and successes in business. I enjoyed very much the trip that we had in Boston; we visited many business incubators there and we had the chance to discuss furthermore about their business models and their strategies. It was very crucial to learn various strategies that these incubators employ and to understand which can be the most appropriate strategy to apply for our business incubator in Kosovo. The entire program was properly organized and people that were involved in this program are very special to me. I would like to mention the name of Catalina Gorla and thank her for being very helpful from the day one, particularly for her help with the most important part of the program—how to pitch the business idea to investors.” - Abetare “Abby” Domi



“From the program at Dartmouth, I mostly enjoyed the kindness from people there, their willingness to help, the amazing classes and the people I meet throughout the program. People there were very nice and willing to help. They took care for us to have a good time there and in addition they helped me find clients and develop a marketing strategy for my Kosovo web and app development company. I also enjoyed a lot Gregg Fairbrothers’s classes that were very interesting and unique and that taught me a lot about entrepreneurship. I enjoyed meeting all the people there, but I mostly enjoyed the dinner and the class with Michael Clarkin D’85 who taught us about marketing segmentation. Michael is in the outsourcing business and as such I enjoyed talking with him about the world outsourcing trends, the countries active in outsourcing and the potential that Kosovo has on this industry. From Michael I learned the importance that the right marketing segmentation has on the success of the firm and also at the dinner I learned on what is important when choosing a place to outsource and on how a company decides to outsource somewhere.” - Dardan Lajqi



“Considering Kosovo’s situation as a newborn state, thoroughly under-constructed, with the youngest population in Europe who sit all day in the cafes complaining there’s nothing to do, lacking self-initiative and state supporting, brought me to the realization that I need to use my potential and time in a different way rather than just studying for my patients’ well-being and enjoying medical science. So I decided to be part of one of the greatest entrepreneurship programs, being taught by the brightest minds from Tuck School. The program was organized in a way of making us consider all dimensions of innovations and how startups function. They also trained us to be mentors ourselves once coming back in Kosovo, in order to spread that knowledge with our peers. So all these points are what make Balkan Institute/DEN Exchange Program so valuable and different.

We also were provided perfect literature which was really helpful for the overall studying process, but the most valuable and completely different way of studying for me was getting

knowledge and experience from people, such as meeting VC guys, DRTC Board of Directors, having our own office in DRTC, connecting and learning from DRTC-incubated companies, and by doing so having the feeling of group learning. One of the greatest opportunities was also using the method “you learn by doing” by visiting 5 Boston well-known incubators, which was so different from all other parts of the program. We presented our incubator project 5 times in front of DRTC Board, NH government, VCs, and Dartmouth Students Showcase, getting different feedback every time and improving our work and performance. Another great part of the program was also working on groups, learning how to write a detailed business plan, which was a complete new experience for us. I also was provided the opportunity of following an extra Medical School course on “Commercialization in the Clinic, How Innovation Happens,” organized by Prof. Fairbrothers in such a different way, engaging business, engineering, medical students, which I definitely think was the most innovative idea I faced in Dartmouth, and is exactly what future generations are in need of. That class completely changed my point of view toward medicine, and made me consider the opportunity of taking my double major also in Business, one day.

I spent some days in TDC, also followed DHMC doctor’s presentations and visited some health care clinics. Since I’ve been working on the idea of how to build an EMR for Kosovo health care clinics, people in Dartmouth provided me the great opportunity of visiting health care clinics which already use EMR within their clinics, so I’ve seen and learnt also about how EMR works.

The greatest part of all, is that those people engaged in BI/DEN Exchange Program keep me involved in on-going projects between Dartmouth and Kosovo Ministry of Health Pilot Project, working in a Kosovo International Dental Program. Also now I am a member of Foundation for Healthy mothers and babies, founded by DHMC doctors.

My personal impressions for:

Prof. Gregg Fairbrothers : Prof. Gregg is the best description of what an entrepreneur looks/works/thinks like. Weekly touch bases with Prof. Fairbrothers were so helpful in realizing our work progression and improving our ideas. The way he lectures and shares his working experiences, impacted our brains in such a way of considering everything that surrounds us , as a new opportunity for being more innovative ,generating our own businesses and so on. What I really appreciate about Prof. Fairbrothers is his great network that he has and works hard to keep and spread it constantly.

Mrs. Catalina Gorla: Definitely so smart, organized, hard-worker, such an inspiration of how young people should work hard and how to learn by implementing things. Catalina was our main catalyzer in our daily works while in Dartmouth. She has worked hard in our presentation and appearance. She also helped on setting appointments with Boston companies, VC and all other people that we met during our staying in US. Catalina also was our main personality supporter. The thing that I appreciate more about Catalina is that she taught me a “ what technique?!” teaching me the way of how to ask questions and learn from other people experiences. She’s definitely MY MOTIVATION!

Mr. Bill Nisen: sharing his knowledge and experience in incubators was the greatest help we ever faced. He taught us weekly about the way incubators, politics and administration work. Followed each of our meetings and supported each step of our working process.

Mr. Bill Weschler : should be praised for his initiative on starting the program and supporting it further forward.

Sandy Rozyla: Has helped us enormously with setting appointments with DRTC incubated companies, which I think was one of the most powerful/useful part of the program.

Susan Linsey : My main source of connection with Medical School people in Dartmouth. She was my main social life provider.

Students: Really welcoming, friendly, helped me on the learning process. Made my time even better while staying in Dartmouth College.

My bottom line and most important message is that: This program is worthwhile being sponsored, to spread it through Europe and mostly in Kosovo, since Europeans way of thinking and working is far away from entrepreneurial attitude. We're in a great need of getting people out of government and banking jobs and start being more innovative and using more our potential and brains.



The leadership team has so many people to thank for their support throughout this program. It takes a team and we wish we could name you all!

Bret Anderson T'14
Zach Berke D'02
Justin Burris D'15
Cambridge Innovation Center
Clancy Cashion T'14
Branko Cerny D'12
Mike Clarkin D'85
Ashley Conti T'13
Mihai Dinulescu
Kaitlin Donovan T'13
Mac Dougherty T'09
Gordon Ehret D'02, TH'04
Felix Eskey
Gazi Haxhia
Harvard i-Lab
DRTC Board members
(Phil Ferneau D'84, T'96, Jonathan Gould, Benoit Lamontagne, Mary Lintermann, Rob Seelig, Jim Varnum)
DRTC companies
(Celdara, iInTIME, Saureus, and True Progress)
Rina Krasniqi
Graham Lincoln T'13
Susie Linsey
Ekrem Maloku
MassChallenge
MIT Media Lab
John Michel D'14
Andrew Miller T'14
Margaret Mulley
Vikram Narayan D'15
Vishnu Narayanasamy T'13
Andres Bilboa Ocampo T'13
Joe O'Donnell G'71
Jessica Osgood
Eben Pingree T'13

Becky Rice
Robin Rice-Voigt
Matt Rightmire T'96
Mark Robinton TP'13
Matthew Ross D'15
Sandy Rozyla
Kaveh Safavi
Rachel Sarnoff D'12
Jeff Shapiro D'83
Nathan Sharp T'12
Alison Stace-Naughton D'11, TH'13
Laurel Stavis
Yvan Stern-Plaza T'13
Jim Strickler D'50
Jed Talvacchia T'14
TechStars
Mark Tomizawa D'78
Elizabeth Torkelson T'14
Peter Volanakis D'77, T'82
Steve Wheelock
Bill Young
Mike Zubkoff

Check out the Facebook page for a photo chronicle of the Kosovars' adventures (<https://www.facebook.com/DENExchange>).



Kosovars Presenting



Kosovars hanging out



Kosovars pitching at Mitosis campus event



Kosovars on a Boston Field Trip