

Developing a University Partnership

Moscow Bureau

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**Moscow Bureau**

Albania	Bulgaria	Georgia	Lithuania	Russian Federation	Macedonia
Armenia	Croatia	Hungary	Montenegro	Serbia	Turkey
Azerbaijan	Cyprus	Kazakhstan	Poland	Slovakia	Turkmenistan
Belarus	Czech Republic	Kyrgyzstan	Republic of Moldova	Slovenia	Ukraine
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Estonia	Latvia	Romania	Tajikistan	Uzbekistan

## **Background**

The research team was tasked with finding a suitable university partnership for the New Jersey City University (NJCU) Educational Technology Department located within the countries listed in the Moscow region of Eastern Europe. The team, to be known as the Moscow Bureau, or “Bureau,” consisted of four members: Mr. Joseph Borchard, Mr. Matthew Farber, Ms. Jill Hayes, and Mr. James Puglia. Several steps were involved in narrowing down the selection, including creating a list of qualifications and researching universities that match the criteria. The team utilized a variety of free Google Drive applications, including Documents and Forms, Hangouts, and Calendar, to work together in real-time and asynchronously.

### **Early Documentation and Initial Criteria**

Early research began on Saturday, October 5, when Mr. Borchard created a collaborative Google Document to keep track of individual and group findings. Via email, the group decided to delay research until Tuesday, October 8, following a Go To Meeting videoconference with the Vice President of Bureau Operations. Go To Meeting is a real-time video application (“Go To Meeting,” 2013).

Immediately following the Go To Meeting discussion, the Moscow Bureau met via Google Hangout videoconference on to confer and brainstorm university partnership criteria. Google Hangout is a free, video chat application (“Google Hangouts,” 2013). Mr. Borchard created a Google Form to survey the Bureau (See Appendix A). The initial survey contained ten possible options to measure the appropriateness of a partner university. The survey items were based on a brainstorm of ideas that took place over the Google Hangout videoconference. Bureau members ranked the items by what each

felt was important. One desired criterion was to partner with a university that had, or wanted, an affiliation with the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE). New Jersey City University (NJCU) is the “the only Master’s Degree program in New Jersey that is accredited by the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE)” (“Educational Technology,” 2013). On Wednesday, October 9, Mr. Puglia added a formula to the Google Form to assign a mathematical value to the ranked choice. The Form automatically populated when the team responded, highlighting the top five responses with the color blue. At this point, Mr. Farber began to track the team’s actions on a Google Document for later use.

### **Top Five Criteria Selected**

On October 10, all of the team members submitted their responses to the Google Form and the top five criteria were identified as:

- University Programs of Study
- Master Degree or Higher in ICT/Education
- Online Programs of Study
- English Speaking University
- ISTE-affiliate

On Friday, October 11, the Bureau unanimously agreed on the final five criteria. The agreement was a result of a series of email correspondences within the group that day. Discussions focused on trying to make sure the team did not have too narrow a focus. It was decided that the category of “Online Programs of Study” and “University Programs of Study” overlapped as a requirement and should be combined into a single criterion. Additionally, “Business Partnerships/Innovative Practices” was added to the list of qualifications. These changes were made to facilitate in the success of finding

suitable universities to partner with in the region. Mr. Puglia posted the final version of the Bureau's top five on Blackboard Learning's Discussion Board. The criteria included:

- Masters Degree or Higher in ICT/Education
- English Speaking University
- Online and/or University Programs of Study
- ISTE-affiliate
- Business Partnerships/Innovative Practices

### **Rubric and Selection Process**

On Saturday, October 12, the group proceeded to research universities that matched the decided criteria. A weblibliography document of references was shared on Google Drive. To keep track of meetings and deadlines, Mr. Puglia created a shared, group calendar on Google Drive. All members could add and delete to this calendar.

Mr. Farber decided to review ISTE-affiliated universities as a starting point. He discovered the directory of affiliates on ISTE's website. The list appeared to be populated with other organizations that had similar objectives as ISTE, or local affiliates, like the New Jersey Association of Educational Technology (NJ AET) and the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL). As a result, Mr. Farber called ISTE's national office. The ISTE customer service representative could not locate information on its website. There was an infographic with a map, but no key. The representative took Mr. Farber's email address and said she would ask around the office and would reply via email. No reply was ever made. Similarly, Ms. Hayes contacted ISTE on October 15 after she searched the Internet to find more information. Ms. Hayes made a few telephone calls to ISTE and was directed to leave a voicemail message with the Affiliate Director, Ms. Susan Larson.

There was no listed ISTE-affiliate in Russia or in the former Soviet republics, but there were several located in Eastern Europe. The major ISTE affiliate in Europe was the European League for Middle Level Education (ELMLE). Recently, there had been a conference in Budapest, Hungary, a country covered by the Moscow Bureau. Alan November, an ISTE member, was the keynote speaker. Attendees of the 2012 conference in Prague, Czech Republic, received college credit from the State University of New York, in Buffalo.

On Saturday, October 12, Mr. Farber emailed three members of the ELMLE Steering Committee who represented Eastern European nations. The email asked for assistance and detailed the team's criteria and objectives. Ms. Catherine Dick from the Czech Republic replied, stating, "I do not know of any university-level ISTE affiliates within Europe" (personal communication, October 14, 2013). Later that day, Mr. Farber received a message from Dr. Tami Canale, the ELMLE representative from Budapest, Hungary. Mr. Canale stated that Mr. Derek Harwell, the President of ELMLE, would personally respond to the team's request. Mr. Harwell wrote that there were "universities that have Master's and Ph.D. in educational technology," which is favorable because it matches one of the Bureau's criteria (personal communication, October 15, 2013). As a result, Mr. Farber reported to the group that the ISTE-affiliation requirement could work to the advantage of the research team; NJCU has a desirable affiliation, thus making it a well-fitted complement to Moscow Bureau-based universities that meet the remaining criteria.

On Tuesday, October 15, the team met via Google Hangout to discuss individual assignments and the university selection process. Each member chose three countries in

the region to research. The group created a Google Spreadsheet designed to be used as a rubric to identify the top two universities that meet the five criteria. The rubric was based on the previously identified criteria and on one-through-five scoring scale. Along with the rubric, a Notes section was added to further justify each university selection.

### **Guided Research on Targeted Moscow Bureau Countries**

On Thursday, October 17, Mr. Farber researched universities in Russia, Turkey, and Hungary. He used Google Chrome as an Internet browser because of its built-in translation feature. The World University Rankings and the Top Universities websites were used as a starting point to guide research. Very few institutions met the Bureau's criteria. In fact, no university in Hungary matched the requirements for NJCU partnership. Mr. Farber decided to pursue research in another nation not already chosen by a team member.

The research on the university ranking websites led Mr. Farber to Hacettepe University, in Ankara Turkey, Moscow State University, and the University of Latvia. Upon first glance, Hacettepe University seemed to be the best fit. It has an Educational Technology Department and, according to its website, the "Department of Computer Education and Instructional Technology is currently looking for partner institutions for cooperation" ("Department of Computer Education," 2013). Unfortunately, no English language courses were offered. Similarly, the program at Moscow State University included, "modern teaching aids and computer technologies," but Russian-language proficiency was a requirement ("Faculty of Educational Studies," 2013).

Mr. Farber discovered that the University of Latvia, located in a European Union country, met most of the Bureau requirements. The University offered a Master of Arts

in Teaching and it was taught in English (“University of Latvia,” 2013). Moodle, commonly used in high schools and colleges in the United States, was listed as its e-learning portal (“University of Latvia,” 2013). According to the University of Latvia website, the school seemed to be positioned as a magnet for other European countries. Several business connections were also listed, including the U.S.-based Soros Corporation (“University of Latvia,” 2013). It was the opinion of Mr. Farber that a Master of Arts or and Educational Doctorate Degree would be a perfect complement to this forward-thinking university.

Mr. Puglia reviewed criteria for several universities in the region. Building upon earlier research from the Moscow Bureau’s initial report, educational institutions in Estonia were reviewed. Estonia continues to become a country that promotes forward-thinking practices with a strong, democratic form of leadership modeled by their current President Ilves (Estonia, 2011). In a move to work with European Union nations, Estonia has become one of the leading countries as it pertains to innovation.

A promising university was the University of Tartu. One of the most compelling reasons to choose this university would be that it “encourages partnerships with other research-based universities. The school offers educational science courses and the curriculum can be offered in English. The University promotes innovative practices and has a specific page devoted to an Idea Lab to challenge students to develop projects and innovative prototypes” (“University of Tartu,” 2013).

Mr. Puglia researched the Lithuania University of Education and found that it is a major teacher institution (“Lithuania University of Educational Studies,” 2013). English

is not always spoken, but can be offered for some programs. They have a partnership with the Kaunas University of Technology, also located in Lithuania.

Because the Moscow Region is located in Russia, the new Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology was reviewed (“Skolkovo Institute of Technology,” 2013). This newly formed university has classes in English. This university is currently aligned with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), has an innovation center and offers science, technology, engineering, and math programs. Both institutions offer a Masters of Science and a Ph.D. degree.

Universities were also researched in Poland and Croatia. She began her investigation by selecting universities in Poland that offered courses in English and found that many universities offered English language courses in their undergraduate and graduate level programs. As a result, she compared the programs offered at each university to see which courses and degrees were similar to the ones offered at NJCU. Here, she discovered two universities in Poland that had technology and education programs. The University of Silesia in Katowice offered degrees such as Education in Technology and Informatics and Teacher Education. The university has 300 partnership agreements with other universities. They are also part of the European Union Project. The Pedagogical University of Cracow was also an institution researched for the Moscow Bureau. The university offered Master’s Degree in Teacher Education and a Masters in Education in Technology. The Pedagogical University of Cracow also is part of the European Credit Transfer.

Then Ms. Hayes researched universities in Croatia using the same research methods that were used for the universities in Poland. The University of Split and the

University of Zagreb both offered English Language Courses. The University of Split only offered two study programs in English: Medicine and Philosophy. The University of Zagreb offered many more English Language Programs. They also offered graduate degrees in Teacher Education as well as Counseling in European Education. Here, it was discovered that the university has more than 140 partnership agreements with leading universities from Europe, North and South America, Australia and Asia. The University of Zagreb is a member of several university networks and international associations and participates in a number of various exchange programs.

Mr. Borchard researched universities in both Bosnia and Ukraine. He began by researching universities and colleges that offered programs in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and in Education. Mr. Borchard narrowed down his search by identifying universities that offered programs in the English language. To further narrow his search, Mr. Borchard researched universities that also offered courses online.

Sumy State University in Ukraine and the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia were two prospective institutions with which New Jersey City University could partner. The University of Sarajevo is the largest university in Bosnia, offering both Master's and Doctorate degrees. It partners with other institutions in other European countries as well as universities in Canada and United States and is a member of the European Credit Transfer system. While the school offers some courses online, the courses offered in College of Teacher Education are not.

Mr. Borchard also researched the Sumy State University in the Ukraine. He discovered that many of the University's classes are offered in the English language.

Sumy State University offers classes and whole academic degrees online. The University is a member of the International Education Society and partners with other Universities in a multitude of different countries. The Department of Informational Technology offers Master's level degrees.

On Sunday, October 20, the Bureau reconvened via Google Hangout. Mr. Puglia, Ms. Hayes, and Mr. Farber voted on the rubric shared as a Google Spreadsheet based on each of their investigations. A number ranging from one (being the least desirable), to five (representing the closest match to a criterion), was added to each box in the interactive rubric. Mr. Puglia suggested adding appendices showing screenshots of the rubric to follow at the end of the report. The score of a "5" denoted a very strong mark related to areas, such as innovation, English-speaking and the other categories. The score of a "1" was at the other end of this spectrum. Because of size and configuration constraints, it was decided to not include the raw data in the early draft of the analysis report. The document remained open until the middle of that week, allowing Mr. Borchard to contribute asynchronously. The quantitative rubric was to be only one part of the selection process, as the group scheduled multiple online conversations to discuss the merits of each identified University.

### **Choices Narrowed to Universities from Latvia and Estonia**

On Tuesday, October 22, the Bureau made its final decision. The meeting took place via email and on Google Hangout. The rubric was reviewed (See Appendix B), as was the anecdotal findings about the top choices. No university in the region exactly fit the template the Bureau created or had direct ISTE-affiliation. Nonetheless, the universities from Latvia and Estonia were deemed suitable matches to partner with NJCU.

Estonia and Latvia are members of the European Union (EU). The Bureau viewed EU membership as an important, but not necessary, factor. Both of the universities offer graduate degrees in education delivered online and in English. Geographically, the universities were located in the westernmost sections of the former Soviet Union and were positioned as leaders in the region.

### **University of Latvia Selected**

The University of Latvia, similar to NJCU, is marketed as a forward-thinking university with a strong academic reputation. It is also positioned as a magnet school for Western Europeans who are seeking a valuable education in fields ranging from medicine to teaching. Its education courses are offered in English and via the Internet. The University web site boasts that the “number of available courses held in English increases every year” (“University of Latvia,” 2013). The University of Latvia uses several web-based tools, including Moodle, to deliver its e-learning experience. This was deemed attractive by the Bureau because Moodle is commonly used in higher-level education institutions in the United States (“Moodle,” 2013).

The University of Latvia meets many other Bureau specifications. Several international business connections, including the Soros Foundation, backed by billionaire George Soros, and the Volkswagen Corporation, have been previously harvested (“University of Latvia,” 2013). The school is a member of several international organizations and groups and has agreements with “525 cooperation agreements with over 278 universities in 28 European countries” (“University of Latvia,” 2013). The University of Latvia focuses “on the content and quality of international cooperation in order to make internationalization a balanced element of education and research

(“University of Latvia,” 2013). An international partnership with NJCU’s Educational Technology Department, which is ISTE-accredited, could be mutually beneficial by bolstering the University of Latvia’s reputation as a leader in 21<sup>st</sup> Century higher education and NJCU as a partner for emerging new economies.

Ms. Hayes drafted a letter to contact the decision-maker at the University of Latvia. Mr. Farber revised the draft based on his experience researching the school. The Bureau is hopeful that its recommendation will come to fruition.

### **Document Revised**

The group reviewed feedback from members of the New Jersey City University Educational Technology Cohort and made modifications to both the letter and to this document. The latest documents are to be submitted for final review on November 5, 2013.

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## Appendix B - Moscow Bureau Rubric for University Selection

University Selection Rubric- Moscow Region

Please note that this rubric was not the only determining factor in the final University choice. Online discussions were held to finalize the decision.

Vote on this sheet 1 to 5 in each category	University Selection Rubric.Moscow Region	English-Speaking University 1-5 highest	Online or Universities Study Program	Innovation/business practices	ISTE Affiliate	Masters or Higher in Education/ICT	Average
Croatia	University of Zagreb <a href="http://www.unizg.hr">http://www.unizg.hr</a>	3	4	3	1	3	2.80
Turkey	Hacettepe University <a href="http://www.egitim.hacettepe.edu.tr">http://www.egitim.hacettepe.edu.tr</a>	1	2	5	4	5	3.40
Estonia	University of Tartu <a href="http://www.ut.ee/en/admissions/information-specific-countries">http://www.ut.ee/en/admissions/information-specific-countries</a>	4	3	5	2	5	3.80
Bosnia	University of Sarajevo <a href="http://www.umsl.edu/services/abroad">http://www.umsl.edu/services/abroad</a>	4	2	2	0	3	2.20
Russia	Lomonosov Moscow State University <a href="http://www.msu.ru/en/info/structure">http://www.msu.ru/en/info/structure</a>	0	1	3	0	0	0.80
Latvia	University of Latvia <a href="http://www.lu.lv/eng/">http://www.lu.lv/eng/</a>	5	5	4	1	5	4.00
Poland	Pedagogical University of Cracow <a href="http://www.up.krakow.pl/en/page=about">http://www.up.krakow.pl/en/page=about</a>	3	2	3	2	4	2.80
Lithuania	Lithuania University of Educational Studies <a href="http://www.vpu.lt/en/Page.aspx?pageID=2940">http://www.vpu.lt/en/Page.aspx?pageID=2940</a>	2	4	4	1	3	2.80
Russia	Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology	5	2	5	1	1	2.80