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Theme: Higher Education Globalization and Internationalization

Towards internationalization of a public college in the context of diversity and social complexity: extant road posts on the journey

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The presentation will first delineate the nature of the project, subsequently provide an overview of its development hitherto and close with current contemplations, dilemmas and open question with regard to the future course.

The college is a partner in a European Tempus project (IRIS) designed to foster academic international relations in Israeli colleges by means of promoting the quality of education, expanding international research and innovation.

Extant efforts at this academic institution in the domain of internationalization entailed by and large sporadic activities. These were based on professional ties of individual faculty members or initiatives sponsored by the college management (president, provost and CEO). The IRIS project provides an opportunity for the college to develop its vision, goals and objectives in the realm of internationalization. The first phase examined students' attitudes and complemented the needs assessment process by exploring academic faculty's perceptions with regard to internationalization. The latter component was conducted in light of research evidence (for example, Friesen, 2012) highlighting active involvement of academic staff in the internationalization processes as an essential ingredient not only in their inauguration and mobilization but also in their sustainability.

Based on the findings of the needs assessment, internal discussion of the college project team and the ongoing training provided by the IRIS project, an initial draft of a strategic plan for internationalization has been developed, including some operational steps and pilot activities. The strategic plan is currently undergoing final revisions, attempting to match the strategic goals with the main mission statements, prioritizing various goals and embedding them in a time frame. The strategies of internationalization address both structural as well as process issues.

The task of devising a strategic plan constitutes a challenging and intricate endeavor as it requires taking into account the requirements of the EU, the college's overall vision, local needs and restrictions and the complexities of the diverse social context

which are not necessarily converging. Thus, concerted efforts are invested into reconciling and bridging among the disparities.