

## OPINION

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Scholars from Ukraine, UMass find common ground

On May 3, the University of Massachusetts Amherst marked its one-year partnership with the Kyiv School of Economics in Ukraine. Shortly after Russia launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, UMass partnered with KSE to support research and education and to retain human capital in Ukraine.

To acknowledge the anniversary of the partnership and its success, Tymofii Brik, the rector of KSE, visited UMass. The day began with a symposium, under the auspices of the International Programs Office, featuring scholars in Ukraine, supported by the partnership, and their UMass Amherst faculty hosts at the Isenberg School of Management and the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences.

Panels were held on topics including agricultural supply chains in wartime and the challenges of disability rights and disinformation amid war.

The scholars in Ukraine are based not only at KSE but at the Ukrainian Catholic University, the Kyiv Mohyla National Academy, the National Academy of Sciences in Ukraine, the Volodymyr Dahl Eastern Ukrainian National University and the National University "Odessa Law Academy" (a total of 15).

Some of the speakers in Ukraine endured air raids during the symposium. Their appreciation of this partnership and enthusiasm for it was palpable. The challenges that they continue to face, as we enter the 15th month since the invasion of Feb. 24, 2022, are many.

One of the scholars had to relocate twice since then because of damage to his university.

They are subject to frightening air raids, have endured electric power outages and Internet disruptions and lack of water.

The collaboration has yielded important research studies, timely conference presentations, and collegial friendships during these extremely challenging times. The partnership demonstrates that people of the free world care and value the importance of higher education in wartime and in peace time.

The day ended with a seminar given by Brik on "Resilience of Ukrainian Universities and Communities."

In his seminar, he described how KSE and other universities have adapted to provide instruction, some more successfully than others. He spoke about the value

of our unique partnership. In addition, he described some of the policy work and studies being generated by KSE on the immense damages in the war on educational institutions and other sectors, the projected reconstruction costs, and the attitudes of the people in Ukraine towards their government.

Brik noted that trust in government has greatly increased, including trust in mayors, and that decentralization has strengthened networks in the war and has forged more resilient communities.

I hope that what UMass has done through its partnership with KSE inspires other educational institutions to innovate by building lifelines to Ukraine across the miles.

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