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Supporting Ukraine Through Academic Partnership

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When Russia illegally invaded Ukraine earlier this year, Isenberg School of Management Professor **Anna Nagurney**—the daughter of refugees who fled Ukraine during World War II—knew she was in a unique position to make a difference.

As a member of the International Academic Board of the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), located in Ukraine's capital city, and now a co-chair of its Board of Directors, Nagurney assisted in spearheading the creation of a multi-level partnership between the University of Massachusetts Amherst and KSE. Through this collaboration, Ukrainian scholars can continue their research during wartime; all eight scholars selected for the virtual Scholar in Residence program through Isenberg have accepted their invitations; other schools and colleges at the university are in the process of inviting virtual scholars.



"There was already a lot of ground-level support at UMass Amherst for the Ukrainian colleagues, so this was a natural evolution of our concerns," said Nagurney, the Eugene M. Isenberg Chair in Integrative Studies, about the partnership. "I was thrilled. UMass Amherst is one of the first universities to establish a partnership with a Ukrainian university. In a way, I also think it is a model." The agreements were finalized earlier this year by KSE President **Tymofiy Mylovanov** and Rector **Tymofii Brik** and **John McCarthy**, now emeritus provost and senior vice chancellor for Academic Affairs for UMass Amherst.

Those chosen for the virtual scholars program are faculty at universities in Ukraine, plus one advisor to the government. They have each been paired with an Isenberg faculty host and are studying everything from the motivation of consumer choice when goods are produced using green energy, to improving business and public safety using behavioral economics, to even how the war in Ukraine influences the European nation's state budget, plus identifying better routes for the export of agricultural products.

"This is a very unique and special partnership," said KSE Rector Brik to the scholars and their Isenberg host faculty members during a kickoff video meeting on November 30. Brik, who was logged in to the meeting with several of his KSE colleagues from a bomb shelter, continued, "We have received a lot of intangible moral support, but very few organizations have offered very strong, tangible institutional support. This program is very tangible and very helpful."

In addition to the virtual scholars program, the partnership will create an academic exchange program for undergraduate and graduate students from Ukraine to study in Amherst for a semester or academic year with nearly all costs waived.

"It's very, very uplifting to do something significant and concrete because a lot of people want to help, but they don't know what to do," Nagurney said in an interview.

Keeping Education Going During Wartime

Over five months, the virtual scholars will work on their studies alongside their hosts. Come the spring, the group will participate in a virtual symposium to feature their research and collaborations.

"Many of those who are staying in Ukraine are continuing the academic enterprise. They're managing to somehow teach, despite being in bomb shelters with minimal electric power or internet," she said. "We wanted to support them, and this is a big help."

Kalpen Trivedi, UMass Amherst's vice provost for Global Affairs and director of the International Programs Office, also spoke at the welcome meeting, thanking the faculty leaders who spearheaded the partnership by writing a letter to the university's leadership that urged it to act in support of Ukrainian students and scholars.

"My role from the central administration of the university is to bring together opportunities and find the resources to make good things happen," he said. "I could not be more delighted that we have managed to make this partnership happen in such short order."

Despite all the positives the partnership has brought, Nagurney is deeply concerned about everyone who is currently living in Ukraine.

"It's hard. You always worry every morning, 'Are my colleagues OK?' or 'They didn't check in, why?'" she said. "They were without power for hours, they don't have water. I mean, this is the capital of a European country. It's just horrible."

Still, Nagurney is inspired that students living in Ukraine during a time of chaos and turmoil are staying hopeful about a brighter future by continuing their education.

"The innovation is amazing, and so is the resilience of the students there," she said.

Anne Massey, the dean and Thomas O'Brien Endowed Chair at Isenberg, said she is honored to be a part of the partnership between UMass and KSE.

"As a school, we appreciate the significant challenges you, your colleagues, friends, and families have faced over these too many months," Massey said in a statement to the kick-off meeting which she was unable to participate in. "As we continue to hope for better days, I hope our partnership helps everyone." Menu

Ultimately, Nagurney said she is extremely proud of UMass for helping those in Ukraine who need assistance.

“Obviously, we hope the war will end soon and we’ll be able to see each other in person. But this program provides a lot of psychological, financial, and professional support,” she said. “And it’s good visibility because we hope other universities will emulate us—some have even started already—and that’s a big compliment.”

The Ukrainian scholars hosted by the Isenberg School of Management as part of the partnership between the Kyiv School of Economics and the University of Massachusetts Amherst:

Elena Besedina, from KSE, will be researching non-tariff trade barriers and impacts on Ukrainian agriculture. Host: Anna Nagurney, OIM

Nina Chala, at the National University of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy, is working on the motivation of consumer choice when consumer goods are produced using green energy. Host: Alicia Johnson, Marketing

Yuriy Dyachenko is at the Volodymyr Dahl East Ukrainian National University (his university was bombed) and he also holds an appointment at the National University of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy. His project is on improving business and public security using behavioral economics. Host: Muzzo Uysal, HTM

Iuliia Kuntsevych, at KSE, will study how business processes can be better managed and enhanced for greater efficiency. Host: Nora Junaid, OIM

Pavlo Martyshev, at KSE, is working on measuring the economic efficiency of alternative ways of exporting agricultural products from Ukraine. Host: Anna Nagurney, OIM

Viktor Maziarchuk is an advisor to the chairman of the Accounting Chamber of Ukraine. His project is on the influence of the war in Ukraine on the state budget and peculiarities of MPs' (Members of Parliament) amendments to the state budget and budget efficiency. Host: Anya Mkrtychyan, Finance

Maksym Obrizan, at KSE, is using the household budget survey (HBS) of Ukraine for 2020 (and later years when they become available) in order to identify the determinants of catastrophic health expenditures before the war. Host: Ina Ganguli, Management and Economics

Pavlo Prokopovych, at KSE, will investigate whether his approach for the existence of equilibria in Bayesian games can be used in first price auctions with a reserve price. Host: Anna Nagurney, OIM

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