From Ideas to Reality

Implementation of the Strategic Plan: Promoting Excellence and Innovation in Teaching

Dear Faculty and Staff,

One of the goals in the University’s strategic plan is transforming BGU into a leading innovative teaching institution. BGU’s Rector, Prof. Chaim Hames, together with the Unit for the Advancement of Quality in Teaching and Learning, are setting high standards for quality instruction and encouraging initiatives for incorporating innovation in teaching, as described below:

**Innovation in Teaching:**
Some 50 faculty members across the University’s various departments have implemented innovative methods of instruction and assessment, using podcasts, video, interactive filmed labs, tutorials, and more. I call on our faculty to continue developing innovative instruction tools using funding from the Unit for the Advancement of Quality in Teaching and Learning.

**Digital Tools for Active Learning:**
The University has integrated several innovative digital tools (Annoto, MentLo, Perusall) into Moodle, in collaboration with the Technologies, Digital & Innovation Division. These tools transform learning into an active and collaborative experience. During the upcoming academic year, we will be the first academic institution in Israel to implement Wooclap, an interactive platform for conducting engaging surveys during lessons.

**Departmental Teaching Ambassadors:**
The “Teaching Ambassadors” program is a new initiative to enhance our teachers’ pedagogical skills. Each department in the Faculty of Natural Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences will appoint a teaching leader, who will support internal learning processes for faculty members by sharing their pedagogical knowledge and experience, imparting innovative teaching practices, and providing individual mentoring.

**Personalized Pedagogical Mentoring:**
Over 55 new faculty members received support through individual observation and feedback on their teaching, pedagogical counselling, and close mentoring as they deal with the challenges of teaching and advancing excellence and innovation.

**Promoting Teaching and Digital Pedagogy:**
Over 800 junior and senior faculty members participated in workshops and training programs for online and hybrid teaching. A range of workshops on new teaching methods will be offered this year as well.

**Online Courses with CampusIL:**
New online courses focusing on computer science, and software and information systems will be launched on CampusIL, the Israeli national platform for online courses. The University is planning to develop numerous additional online courses over the next two years, with support from the Council for Higher Education. These courses will expose the general public to our researchers and scientists and help place BGU at the forefront of online instruction.

**Professional Training and Development:**
A unique modular training program for senior academic faculty was developed. The program enables new faculty members to receive individual and collective feedback on their teaching and to specialize in areas of interest related to teaching, learning, and assessment. The Unit also provides training programs for junior academic faculty. Over 350 teaching assistants and lab instructors underwent training over the past year.

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Ben-Gurion University was recently awarded NIS 9 million from the Council for Higher Education to enhance digital learning possibilities. The grant will be invested in improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

We plan on expanding the implementation of digital learning over the coming year, with the goal of enhancing the pedagogical innovation that has flourished here since the Covid-19 pandemic began. Furthermore, we are planning for the establishment of a Center for Innovation and Excellence in Teaching. The Center will lead BGU’s faculty members to the forefront of teaching and learning over the next few years, develop innovative pedagogies, and provide new opportunities for learning adapted to the needs of all our students.

For further information on the Unit for the Advancement of Quality in Teaching and Learning, visit the Unit website or the Unit’s Moodle guide.

I wish to thank Prof. Timor Melamed, Pro-Rector of Education and the Head of the Unit for the Advancement of Quality in Teaching and Learning, Dr. Michal Erez, Director of the Unit, and its entire staff.

Yours sincerely,
Prof. Daniel Chamovitz, President