

# 2023 Annual Report



BARZINJI INSTITUTE  
FOR GLOBAL VIRTUAL LEARNING

[su.edu/barzinji](https://su.edu/barzinji)



# The Barzinji Institute

The Jamal Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning honors Dr. Barzinji's legacy as an educator, community builder, and humanitarian. This collaboration provides opportunities for individuals and institutions to explore, analyze, and engage in critical thinking, and cross-cultural communication to identify and pursue shared goals.

## Our Mission:

The Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning collaborates with institutions of higher education around the world to explore the similarities and differences in their missions and practices, to understand the challenges that they face and to create solutions in light of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## 2023 Highlights



**300+**

Conference participants  
from around the globe



**5**

Publications



**100**

COIL trained fellows



**7**

presentations at  
international conferences



**2000**

Students impacted by  
COIL



**5000+**

Views on YouTube



**5**

Workshops



**2**

Podcasts

# Letter from the Director

Dear All

What an exciting year! This year we completed projects and initiatives relating to our three pillars - academic, service and conference.

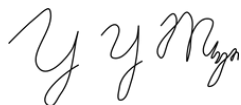
The academic pillar primarily consists of [Collaborative Online International Learning or \(COIL\)](#). This is where faculty from Shenandoah work with faculty from another part of the world to create a module in their classes where the domestic and international students work on a joint project. Faculty design the module together and have their students work on their project throughout the semester together, virtually. Both faculty members go through a specifically designed workshop to learn the best practices of COIL virtual exchange and create an abstract of the module. We graduated two more cohorts of COIL faculty impacting hundreds of students worldwide. Our faculty have been profiled in podcasts, webinars, and awarded fellowships and grants for their work and innovative pedagogy.

The service pillar developed a service project between Shenandoah and an international university regarding one of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This last year the Institute coordinated a “Zero Hunger Project” with Yarmouk University in Jordan that aimed to address the issue of food insecurity in their respective communities. The various delegations [conducted surveys](#) on how to best serve their local clientele and shared the findings with one another. They further [traveled to visit one another](#) and see first hand the impacted populations. Members of the Jordan team were able to publish a paper [“Assessing Refugee Preferences for SDG 2 \(Zero Hunger\) Solutions in Irbid Camp and Sakhra Region: Cultivated Roofs and Refrigerators as Food Banks Interventions”](#) in the internationally recognized journal Sustainability and their results have already influenced Jordanian government policy. Rebecca Gibson from the US team led the creation of a food pantry on Shenandoah’s campus through the Center for Civic Engagement and run by the Center’s work study students. Rebecca notes that “I am so happy that my experience with the Zero Hunger project has opened the doors to a new opportunity for students to serve their own community.”

Last, the highlight of the year was our conference which was a remarkable success with over 300 participants - both in-person and virtual - from various countries attending.

The conference highlighted the Institute's various initiatives such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), its Global Zero Hunger Service Project and Pilgrimage Virtual Reality. Partners from around the world – from the United Kingdom to Malaysia – presented on their collaborative projects with Shenandoah faculty, staff and students. Keynote and plenary speakers shared insights and ideas regarding innovation in higher education and the future of global virtual learning. The video recordings of the conference are available on our [YouTube channel](#) and conference participants continue to be in touch with one another generating new ideas and projects. Most importantly, the conference witnessed the signing of papers [to endow the Barzinji Institute](#) which will give permanence to the Institute's programs and mission.

We look forward to a new phase of the Institute where we will now be endowed and thank our various donors and supporters. We look to further institutionalize COIL and virtual exchange within Shenandoah University and support our alumni network through conferences, webinars and publications. Along the way, we will continue to contribute to the larger COIL, virtual exchange and international partnership community on how we can promote global collaboration and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. We look forward to the year ahead and your continued support! All the best.



## **Younus Y. Mirza**

Director of the Barzinji Institute  
For Global Virtual Learning  
Shenandoah University  
[ymirza@su.edu](mailto:ymirza@su.edu)





**“Respect for  
humanity is the  
foundation of all  
interaction.”**

**– Dr. Jamal Barzinji**

# Endorsements

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"The Barzinji Institute has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to increase mutual understanding across cultures through virtual exchange and other initiatives in a way that other institutions should model. Partnering with Shenandoah University, the Institute creates opportunities for global learning and competency development for students who might not otherwise have these opportunities. Having attended a similar undergraduate institution myself, I wish that the Barzinji Institute, and their dedication to sharing the benefits of virtual learning, had been there for me and I am convinced that their support improves the educational experience of students on all sides of these exchanges."

## **Kyle Kastler**

Associate Director of Global Learning Abroad  
Education Abroad, Office of International Affairs  
University of Maryland, College Park



"As a Civil Engineering professor at Yarmouk University, Jordan, my experience with the Barzinji Institute's COIL program at Shenandoah University has been profoundly impactful. Participating in the 2023 conference and the 'Zero Hunger' project, I observed Shenandoah's commitment to global education and international collaboration. The COIL program, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and problem-solving skills, is instrumental for students in today's interconnected world. The Barzinji Institute, honoring Dr. Jamal Barzinji's legacy, excels in integrating global perspectives into education, making Shenandoah a leader in global virtual learning. This partnership has greatly enriched my professional journey, highlighting the importance of global collaboration in education."

## **Ali M. Shehadeh**

Civil Engineering Professor  
Yarmouk University



“It has been energising and inspiring to work with the Barzinji Institute over the past couple of years. Our relationship started when Shenandoah was one of only three US universities selected for the US-UK Fulbright Commission’s Global Challenges Teaching Awards (GCTA), the first awards of their kind to bring together classrooms on both sides of the Atlantic in a virtual exchange. Dr Younus Mirza’s commitment and thoughtful approach to Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) played a major role in making the COIL course on climate change between Shenandoah and Cardiff University such a success, both for the students and the universities. At a time when social divisions and international tension affect ever greater numbers of people, the work that the Barzinji Institute does to open minds, promote tolerance and create lasting relationships through international education could not be more important.”

**Maria Balinska**

Executive Director US-UK Fulbright Commission



“The Barzinji Institute and Dr. Mirza provide unique opportunities for students, faculty and staff to collaborate internationally, both virtually and in person, while at Shenandoah University. Not only do we learn and practice communicating and working with international partners, we also experience international travel and opportunities for face to face collaboration and relationship-building. The opportunities grow exponentially as each project is developed, and the participants experience benefits far beyond those identified in the planning phase. It has been a true pleasure both to participate and to observe the students as they are exposed to and embrace new cultures, ideas and practices.”

**Rebecca Gibson**

Director of Center for Civic Engagement  
Shenandoah University



“I really admire what the Barzinji Institute at Shenandoah University has done in online collaborative learning since it started in 2020. Barzinji Institute, led by Dr Younus Mirza, has really changed the way people learn about the world and grown the idea of global citizenship. Their pioneering work in Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) has united students and faculty from diverse backgrounds, transcending geographical boundaries and promoting cross-cultural collaboration. Barzinji Institute's efforts to encourage faculty members from different fields to work together are admirable, and they have led to groundbreaking improvements in the way students are taught. It's impossible to deny that they have changed education and given many people the tools they need to become more involved and responsible global citizens. They used COIL as a great example of how to use technology to make global cooperation more meaningful. Barzinji Institute at Shenandoah University has made important contributions to online collaborative learning and global citizenship that have set a high standard for schools all over the world. Their creative approach will definitely continue to shape the future of education for many years to come.”

### **Mira Kartiwi**

Director of Centre for Professional Development  
International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)



“The Barzinji Institute has had another productive and meaningful year. The 2023 Barzinji Institute Conference was a successful event, gathering participants from across the globe to discuss higher education issues and developments. The participants were able to engage in social exchanges, as well as academic conversations. The Barzinji Institute was also able to host its first visiting scholar, which helped to internationalize the Shenandoah University campus, and to spread best practices. I have enjoyed interacting with the participants in such a rich and trusting atmosphere.”

### **Emily Hollins**

Registrar  
Shenandoah University





## The Barzinji Institute Conference

# Expanding & Evolving Global Virtual Learning







The conference pillar highlighted the Institute's various initiatives such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), its Global Service Project and Virtual Reality projects. In Fall 2023, the Barzinji Institute held its second conference where partners from around the world – from the United Kingdom to Malaysia – presented on their collaborative projects with Shenandoah faculty, staff and students. Keynote and plenary speakers shared insights and ideas regarding innovation in higher education and the future of global virtual learning.

The video recordings of the conference are available on our [YouTube channel](#).

## COIL Training

Global Virtual Learning graduated two more cohorts on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). The training teaches American and international faculty how to create a shared module in their classes based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals and have their students interact with each other and engage in project-based learning. The workshops are organized by Dr. Vicky Spencer with support from Dr. Alanna Tierno. We currently have over 100 trained fellows impacting over 2000 students globally.

### Global Virtual Learning Announces its COIL fellows!

Fellows will go through an extensive training on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) and will have their students work together on joint projects. The Fellows will work towards the Project's mission of mutual understanding in diverse societies and innovation in higher education through global collaboration.



Meet the Fellows

# Global Service Project

The Global Service Project on Zero Hunger concluded its project with Yarmouk University (Jordan) that aimed to address the issue of food insecurity in their respective communities. The various delegations conducted surveys on how to best serve their local clientele and shared the findings with one another. They then traveled to visit one another and see first hand the impacted populations. Members of the Jordan team were able to [publish a paper on their results](#) that has already influenced Jordanian government policy. Rebecca Gibson from the US team led the creation of a food pantry on Shenandoah's campus through the Center for Civic Engagement and run by the Center's work study students.

“This was undoubtedly the most meaningful experience I've had at Shenandoah University. Being able to connect with our partners at Yarmouk University, and even more importantly, being able to speak with some of those experiencing food insecurity in Jordan, made this project feel less abstract and more impactful.”

- Josephine Saikali, Shenandoah University student





## Workshops



The Barzinji Institute facilitated five workshops on Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD), Town Hall, Pedagogy and the Future of Higher Education. The workshops allow Shenandoah and its partner universities to exchange the newest ideas on higher education and teaching and learning.

The first was on Reflective Structured Dialogue (RSD) at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM). Shenandoah University faculty members Kevin and Cooper Minister and Bridgewater College faculty members Harriet Hayes and Daniel A. Finseth conducted the workshop which focused on constructive dialogue and how RSD is implemented at Shenandoah and Bridgewater. The Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW) sponsored the workshop.

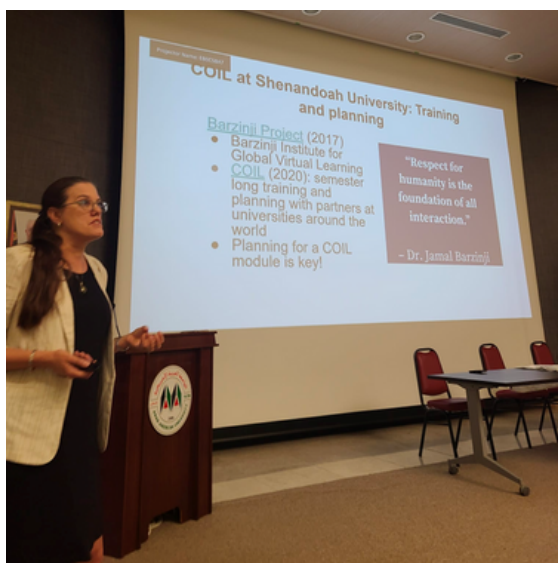




Associate Provost Amy Sarch and Dean of College of Arts and Sciences Jeff Coker visited the University of Sarajevo where they met with the Faculty of Islamic Studies, visited the University's Women's Center, gave a workshop on Shenandoah University's Town Hall concept and presented on the Future Trends of Higher Education. They then drove to the University of Split and University of Dubrovnik where they met with faculty and international education administrators and discussed COIL virtual exchange partnerships. They finally traveled to the Netherlands where they visited the University of Twente to learn about humanitarian engineering and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences to learn about European virtual exchange.







COIL Fellows Staci Strobl, Kathleen Eid-Heberle, and Susan Burt presented on COIL faculty training and how it enhanced their pedagogy and teaching. The Fellows also toured the Arab American University of Palestine (AAUP) campus and visited Jerusalem. Shenandoah faculty member Mohammad Obeid led the trip and developed the partnership with AAUP.

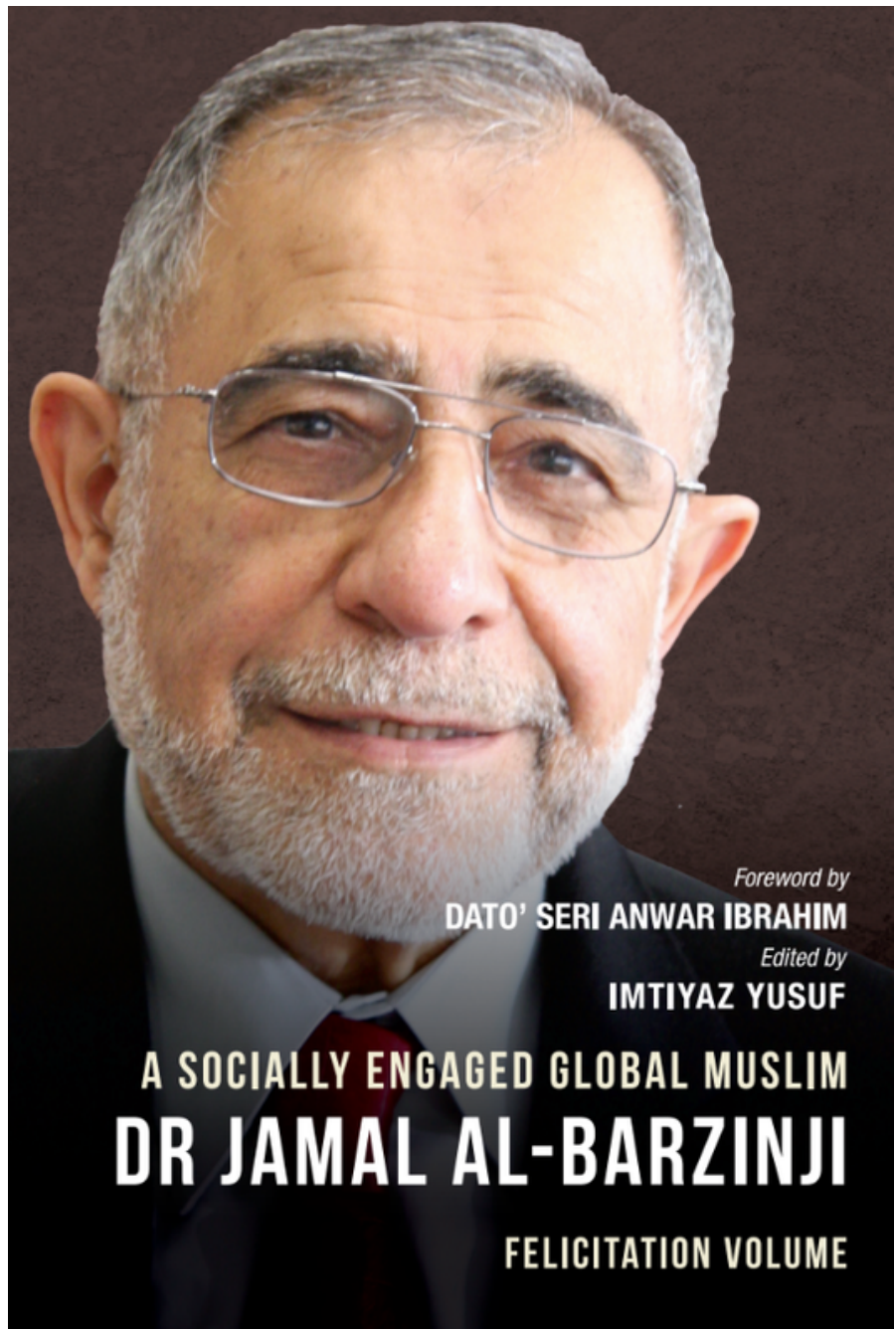
## Awards



Emily Hollins [pictured top left] was awarded for being an original Barzinji Project delegate, sustaining the relationships through Global Citizenship Project (GCP) trips and COIL Virtual Exchange and helping with the recent Barzinji Conference. Josephine Saikali [pictured top right] (represented by her sister and mother) was recognized for her work on the Zero Hunger Project and her presentation at the International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC). Kyle Hooven [pictured top middle] (along with Emily) was recognized for going above and beyond in hosting and taking care of the delegates at the Barzinji conference.



# 5 Publications



The Barzinji Institute facilitates the publication of [A Socially Engaged Global Muslims: Dr. Jamal al-Barzinji](#). The book was [formally launched at the Barzinji Institute Fall Conference](#) and was published by the Center for Islam in the Contemporary World (CICW).



COIL Faculty Fellows from Shenandoah University Professor Catherine Shiffman and Professor Vicky Spencer published the article "Virtual Exchange for Adult Learners: Access and Design Considerations". In their article, Professor Catherine and Vicky speak about their experiences doing COIL Virtual Exchange with graduate students and adult learners which provide unique opportunities and challenges. Catherine Shiffman was able to expand on the article and publish "Virtual Exchange for Graduate and Adult Learners: A Literature Review" in the Journal of Virtual Exchange. She initially presented the paper at the International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC) 2022.

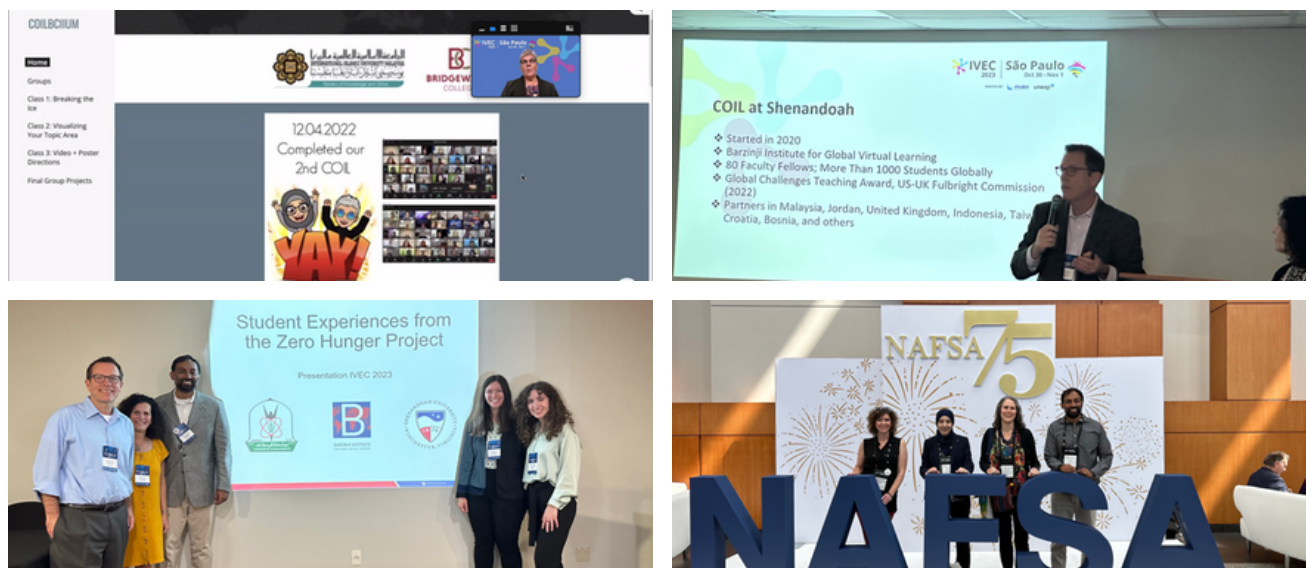


COIL Fellow from the University of Sarajevo [Dina Sijamhodžić-Nadarević](#) has published an article ["Contribution of Islamic Religious Education to Intercultural Values in Pluralistic European Cultures: Insights from Bosnia and Herzegovina"](#). In her article, Professor Dina speaks about her experiences doing COIL virtual exchange with Shenandoah faculty member [Professor Catherine Shiffman](#).



Professors Amal Elgharbawy (International Islamic University Malaysia) and Mariam Kotachi (Shenandoah University, USA) create class projects regarding Halal Tourism and McDonalds in the US and Malaysia. Amal and Mariam were also able to publish regarding their collaborations in the article ["Designing Sustainable Business Models for Islamic Entrepreneurship"](#) in the edited volume Contemporary Discourse of Halal and Islamic Entrepreneurship.

# Conference Presentations



The Barzinji Institute facilitates seven presentations at various international conferences. They included:

- “Empowering Students for Global Collaboration: Leveraging VE/COIL to Address Global Challenges” at AAC&U Global Learning Conference with Veronica Onorevole, Hope Windle, Christina Lee and Younus Mirza
- “Making COIL Matter: Developing and Sustaining a Globally-Engaged Faculty” by Jeff Coker and Amy Sarch at the International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC)
- “Student Perspectives from Zero Hunger Project” by Younus Mirza, Faith Jones and Josephine Saikali Reem Alkharouf, Malak Alboull, and Nusiba Talahmeh at the International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC)
- “Shaking Up With Laughter, Breaking Down Barriers” by Ady Dewey and Atiah Abdullah Sidek at the International Virtual Exchange conference (IVEC)
- “Enhancing and Expanding Participation in International Opportunities through VE/COIL Programs” at the NAFSA International Educator Conference
- “Utilizing VE/COIL to Internationalize and Align Curricula with Sustainable Development Goals” by Veronica Onorevole, Reem Kharouf and Younus Y. Mirza at the American International Education Administrators (AIEA) Conference
- “The Next Right Thing: Moving Forward One Completed Step at a Time” by Scott McClure, Rebecca Gibson, Josephine Saikali and Reem al-Kharouf at the American International Education Administrators (AIEA) Conference



# Pilgrimage VR



President Tracy Fitzsimmons demos the Hajj VR in her "Walks and Pilgrimages" First Year Seminar Course

[Pilgrimage VR](#), a virtual reality training platform, was completed this year and now provides students/users with the opportunity to virtually visit pilgrimage sites around the world, such as that in Mecca. The Project is directed by Shenandoah University Professor [Mohammad F. Obeid](#) and funded by the [Center for Islam in the Contemporary World \(CICW\)](#).



## Hosting

The Barzinji Institute hosted Dr. Nor Mokhtar for the Fall semester as a teaching fellow. Dr. Nor is the COIL partner of Shenandoah University Professor Dr. Kelley Crowley and their work together can be viewed [in this webinar](#). She taught two classes: First Year Seminar and Intercultural Communication in the College of Arts and Sciences. She lived on campus and was part of the academic community and participated in relevant lectures, programs and events. As Nor mentioned, “I am very grateful to the Barzinji Institute for giving me this opportunity. It has been a wonderful experience, everybody is super nice! I am grateful to be part of the SU family.”



The Barzinji Institute hosted Dr. Reem Kharouf where she did a campus tour, visited the international education office and the local Winchester food banks. The trip advanced the Zero hunger project and paved the way for the Shenandoah delegation to visit Yarmouk during Spring Break.





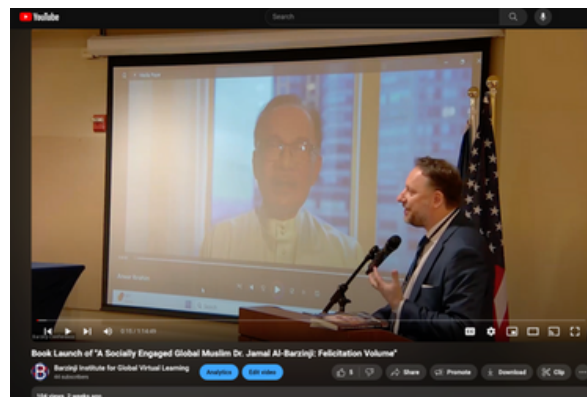
Barzinji Institute helped host guests from the Arab American University of Palestine (AAUP). The delegation spent a week in the US exploring potential relationships and degree programs. In particular, they visited our COIL and Zero Hunger Team as well as the International Programs office. Dr. Mohammad F. Obeid directs the partnership with AAUP.



## YouTube Channel

The [Barzinji Institute YouTube Channel](#) grew to over 50 affiliated videos and almost 50 subscribers with a total of over 5000 views. The various videos highlight presentations related to COIL and virtual exchange as well as faculty and student work.

# 5000+ views



## Podcasts

The [first is produced by the US-UK Fulbright Commission](#) regarding Staci Strobl and Sammie Buzzard's COIL Virtual Exchange project on climate change. They worked together to have their students create podcasts on [Climate Change in Western Australia](#), [Climate Change in the Pacific Islands](#), and [Climate Change in the Canadian Arctic](#). The [second podcast is by the University of Twente's Humanitarian Engineering Program](#) which interviewed Associate Provost Amy Sarch and Dean Jeff Coker. They both speak about the Barzinji Institute, its activities and how it overlaps with concepts regarding humanitarian engineering.




# Communication

The Barzinji Institute [email listserv](#) grows to over 750 members from around the world. We have also updated our [website](#), and developed a presence on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).





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