



BARZINJI INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL VIRTUAL LEARNING
su.edu/barzinji

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



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).

2025 Highlights



125

COIL trained fellows



5

Publications



5000

Students impacted by COIL



10

presentations at international conferences



5

Workshops



10,000+

Views on YouTube

Letter from the Director

Dear All,

First, we commemorate the life and legacy of **Dr. M. Yaqub Mirza**, one of the founders of the Barzinji Institute and major supporters of Shenandoah University, who passed away on December 3rd, 2025. Dr. Yaqub played an instrumental **role in the founding** and the development of the Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning at Shenandoah. He and Dr. Jamal Barzinji outlined the initial ideas for the Barzinji Project, which aimed to promote reform in higher education through international collaboration. They believed that collaboration between various universities, both in the East and West, would strengthen relationships, develop innovative solutions, and promote world peace. Dr. Yaqub helped fund early iterations of the Barzinji Project **and eventually endowed it** through a collaboration with several families and business partners. We want to thank him for all of his contributions, advice, and encouragement. We hope to continue living out his legacy for generations to come.

The 2025-2026 academic year was our second year implementing the **Virtually Going Global Grant**, known as Global Virtual Exchange (GVE) on campus. We were successfully able to institutionalize virtual exchange within our First Year Seminar (FYS) program & our partnership with Yarmouk University in Jordan. This was all made possible due to the generous support of **the Stevens Initiative**. The exchange brought together American and Jordanian undergraduate students for dialogue that focused on carefully-curated events and shared topics, led by student leaders at both universities. All of the students were trained in dialogue facilitation to prepare for the engagements. Integrated as a required component of SU's general education curriculum for all freshmen, and an optional course for Yarmouk University students, binational groups developed projects based on a series of pre-set guidelines developed by SU's curriculum design team that promoted students' interpersonal skills and varied perspectives. Over 1700 students and more than 75 faculty and student mentors participated. 67 percent of students said that the experience enhanced their communication skills, and 89 percent of participants reported an increase in their career readiness skills. For Shenandoah students, 94 percent saw a more favorable view of the Jordanian people after collaborating with them virtually. We look forward to another year of continuing what we learned from the Grant and further institutionalizing COIL within our general education program.

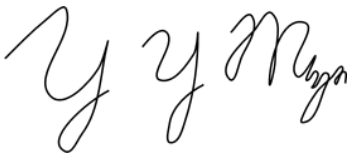
We continue to support Shenandoah University faculty and staff in traveling to visit our partner institutions abroad, delivering workshops, and collaborating on projects. In particular, we conducted workshops in Japan and Sarajevo on topics like Artificial Intelligence,

institutionalizing virtual exchange, and international relations. These workshops represent the spirit of global exchange and give us the opportunity to share our knowledge and experience with our partners. They also help us to collect feedback and suggestions on how we can be more effective in creating impactful, authentic connections for students & faculty.

Outside the classroom, we delivered ten conference presentations on various topics, ranging from COIL Virtual Exchange to International Partnerships holistically. And, we launched a webinar series highlighting unique COIL engagements. These webinars shine a light on the accomplishments of our faculty members, giving them and their COIL partners a chance to share their experience facilitating COIL. These webinars also often include student leaders in the COIL program to share their own perspectives, too. As we look forward to the year ahead, we're developing more resources to support & amplify these student voices. The COIL Student Fellows & Faculty alike have been profiled in podcasts, webinars, and awarded fellowships and grants for their hard work, communication efforts, and innovative pedagogy in virtual learning.

We look forward to the year ahead and appreciate your continued support!

All the best,



Younus Y. Mirza

Director of the Barzinji Institute
For Global Virtual Learning
Shenandoah University
ymirza@su.edu





“RESPECT FOR
HUMANITY IS THE
FOUNDATION OF
ALL INTERACTION.”

DR. JAMAL BARZINJI

ENDORSEMENTS AND TESTIMONIALS

“I’m writing to express gratitude to the Barzinji Institute for allowing me and a few classmates to embrace Malaysian Culture in April. Not only were our flights fully covered, but the Mirza family extended their generosity further by providing each student extra cash for personal use during the trip! I thoroughly enjoyed the experience I gained during this week. We stayed at a beach house for the first two days, attended a traditional cultural dinner where we were serenaded with fantastic hospitality, spent time at an elephant reserve, visited the Batu Caves, and spent time at the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM), which saw us involved in the ISTAC-IIUM Leadership Forum discussing ways of nurturing future generation leaders.

Finally, the main event was meeting and speaking to the Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, to award him an Honorary Law Degree from Shenandoah University. From start to finish, the trip was excellently planned, the opportunity to be in those conference rooms with such outstanding professionals was an invaluable experience, and I can’t state enough how grateful I was to be able to go thanks to the Barzinji Institute!”



Tarick Kamara
Shenandoah University Student



Raida Ramadan
Professor at Yarmouk University, Jordan

“Participating in the Barzinji Institute’s COIL program has been a transformative experience for me and my students at Yarmouk University. Integrating The Global Virtual Exchange (GVE) program into my Translation courses has been a profoundly rewarding experience. Last year, my students had the unique opportunity to collaborate directly with peers from Shenandoah University. Together, they worked across borders to create and translate videos exploring how faith is viewed and practiced in their respective cultures. It was inspiring to watch them navigate both linguistic nuances and deep cultural conversations. Beyond practicing their translation skills, this exchange fostered genuine empathy, mutual respect, and a shared understanding that spans continents. I am deeply grateful for this partnership and the way it empowers our students to connect across differences.”



Aurora Padilla-Jiménez

*Shenandoah University Student
Lead COIL Student Fellow*

“Being able to experience and be a part of Shenandoah University’s Global Virtual Exchange (GVE) and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) programs have given me amazing opportunities, as well as have taught me skills that will benefit me not only throughout my professional career but also my personal experiences. I have had the opportunity to not only be a part of COIL, but also help students navigate GVE within the First Year Seminar (FYS) program. I have seen how friendships and connections have been created and how knowledge and skills have been gained. There is so much value that comes with being a part of the Global Virtual Exchange and Collaborative Online International Learning Programs at Shenandoah University!”

“The Barzinji Project does a wonderful job of promoting cultural exchange, and I have been fortunate enough to partake in two such projects. The first, a trip with SU students to Malaysia, was a transformative trip where SU students had the opportunity to experience Malaysian culture and even meet the Prime Minister. The second was a trip I had longed for since my graduate school days--a trip to Bosnia-Herzegovina. On this trip, I had the opportunity to meet with fellow scholars, tour the region, give two lectures, and plan for a future student trip. I am so thankful for the support from the Barzinji Project and their continued promotion of cultural understanding and diversity.”



Eric Leonard

*Shenandoah University Professor
Political Science
Henkel Family Chair in International Affairs*



Adela Borrallo-Solís

*Shenandoah University Professor, Spanish
Chair of the Department of Languages & Cultural Studies*

“I deeply enjoyed leading a COIL collaboration in my course on language perception across borders and professional success. This course analyzed how the Latinx identity has been constructed in the US so that students can understand how their unique identity, multilingualism and multiculturalism can be a great asset professionally. It was amazing to witness students bringing to life the topics covered in the course while making transformative connections and developing important professional skills. Moreover, having first-year students in their first semester engage in such a digitally and culturally complex project was truly exciting. As a faculty member it warmed my heart to see students embrace so enthusiastically such a demanding and rich experience. I am truly thankful to my class and to our friends at ITESO, Mexico who collaborated so beautifully in this global experience.”

COMMEMORATING THE LIFE OF DR. M YAQUB MIRZA



We commemorate the loss of **Dr. M. Yaqub Mirza**, who was a board member at Shenandoah University and my father. Dr. Yaqub played an instrumental **role in the founding** and the development of the Barzinji Institute for Global Virtual Learning at Shenandoah. He and Dr. Jamal Barzinji outlined the initial ideas for the then Barzinji Project, which aimed to promote reform in higher education through international collaboration. They believed that collaboration between various universities, both in the East and West, would strengthen relationships, develop innovative solutions and promote world peace. Dr. Yaqub helped fund early iterations of the Project **and eventually endowed it** through a collaboration with a few families and business partners.



He continued to be an advisor and confidant and keynoted at the various Barzinji Conferences. Among his greatest accomplishments was to present an honorary doctorate with President Tracy Fitzsimmons to Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, an achievement that stands out as a major highlight of his life and career. He was able to combine his love and belief in higher education and Shenandoah University with global partnerships, collaborations and friendships. You can hear his remarks here.



As President Tracy Fitzsimmons and Chair of the Board Richie Wilkins remarked "We will remember Dr. Mirza for his humility, wisdom, sprinkles of humor (he could never resist telling a joke!), and anonymous gifts of generosity that helped countless students, faculty and staff. But most importantly, we'll remember him for his deep commitment to building a more compassionate and educated world. His impact on Shenandoah University and the many communities he served will be felt for generations."

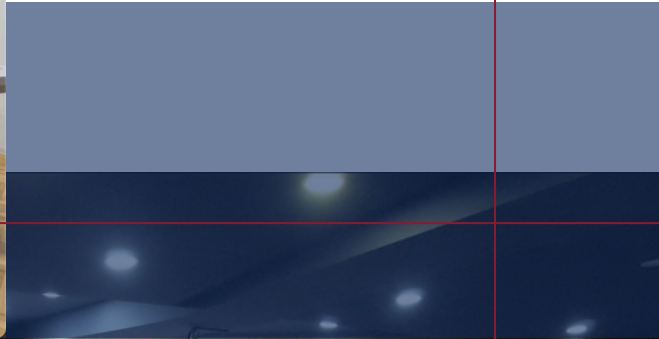


WORKSHOPS

The Barzinji Institute facilitated five workshops on International Relations and the Future of Higher Education. The workshops allow Shenandoah and its partner universities to exchange the newest ideas & challenges that come with international collaboration.

Shenandoah University Professor [Eric Leonard](#) visited Sarajevo and delivered a series of lectures on US foreign policy and law. The first was at the International University of Sarajevo entitled "US Foreign Policy: Continuities and Change" and examined how the Trump administration's foreign policy fits into the broader post-WWII narrative of US grand strategy and the fulfillment of US national interest. The second lecture was at the University of Sarajevo Faculty of Laws entitled "Understanding US Policy Towards International Law." This lecture examined the historical relationship of the United States to international law and entailed an understanding of American Exceptionalism as the basis for this relationship, while using the International Criminal Court as the example of this relationship. Here is [an article about his visit](#).





BARZINJI INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL VIRTUAL LEARNING



AWARDS

On behalf of Shenandoah University, President Tracy Fitzsimmons, Ph.D., recently conferred an [honorary doctorate degree to Malaysia's Prime Minister, Anwar bin Ibrahim](#). PM Anwar was awarded an honorary Doctor of Laws from Shenandoah University in recognition of his leadership and commitment to public service. Dr. Fitzsimmons, who traveled to Malaysia with a group of Shenandoah representatives that included faculty, staff, students and a Board of Trustees member, presented the honorary doctorate to Anwar on Friday, April 11, at the International Islamic University Malaysia's (IIUM) campus in Gombak. To read more about the trip please [click here](#).



GRANTS

Shenandoah University finished its first year of a 500,000 dollar grant from the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative. The Grant enabled young people in the United States, Middle East, and North Africa to connect for meaningful, cross-cultural learning experiences. Over 1700 students participated in the program as well as 75 faculty and student mentors. 67 percent of students said that the experience enhanced their communication skills, and 89 percent of participants reported an increase in their career readiness skills.



COIL Fellow Sawsan Daraiseh from Yarmouk University receives a recognition for her work and is appointed as the Assistant Director of the Language Center.



Virtually Going Global: Institutionalizing Virtual Exchange Through First Year Seminar

Abstract IVEC 178

Shenandoah University (SU) in the United States implemented a virtual exchange program for every undergraduate first year student as part of our Going Global First Year Seminar (FYS) program. Each FYS faculty member was partnered with a faculty member at Yarmouk University in Jordan. Additionally, faculty at both universities were assigned undergraduate student mentors who were embedded in the respective classes to assist with the exchange.

By Amy Sarch, Sawzan Daraiseh, and Younus Mirza

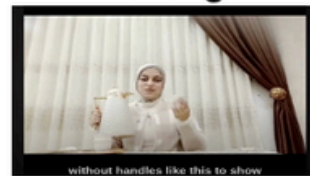
1343 STUDENT PARTICIPANTS, 50 FACULTY, 50 PEER MENTORS

Step 1: Introduction to Jordanian/American Culture on respective campuses



Step 2: Choice:

a. Cultural Artifact Virtual Exchange



OR

b. Common Event Virtual Exchange



Virtually Going Global is implemented by Shenandoah University and is supported by the J. Christopher Stevens Virtual Exchange Initiative (JCSVEI). JCSVEI is a U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs program administered by the Aspen Institute.



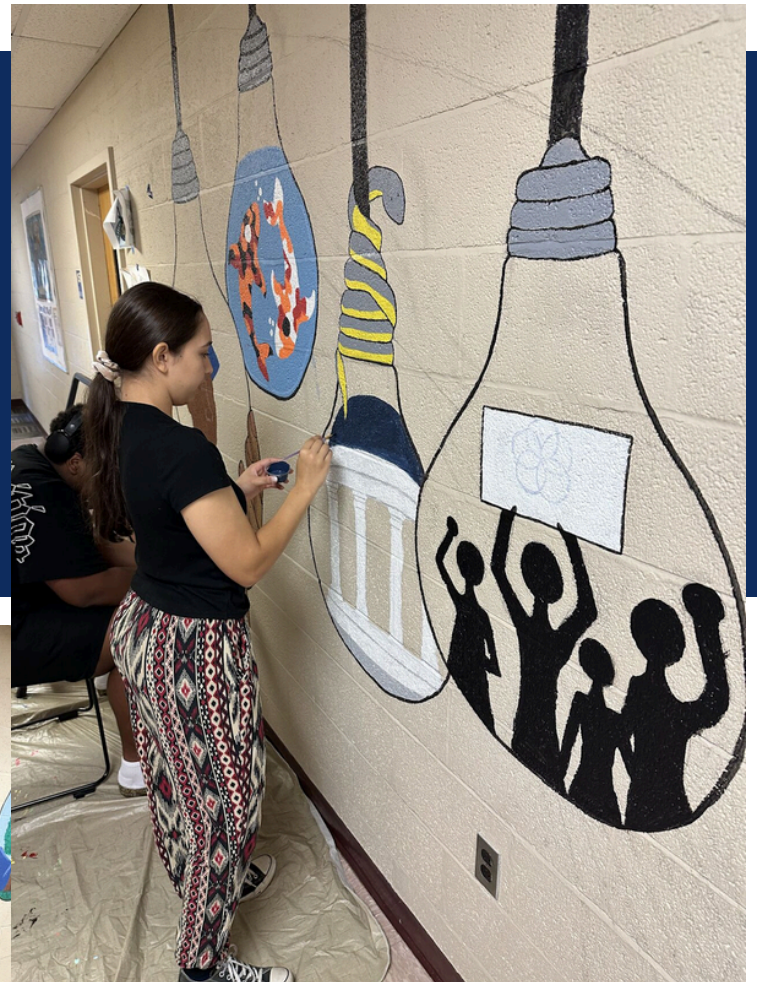
Stevens
Initiative





COIL MURAL

Shenandoah University students finished their mural between Shenandoah University and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). One half of the mural is at our home campus in the USA and the other half is in Malaysia. The mural is testament to the joint COIL virtual exchange collaboration between our students and commitment to sustainability and global change and prosperity. Thank you to [Siti Zubaidah Anuar \(PhD\)](#) and [Abigail Gómez, MFA](#) for the incredible partnership!



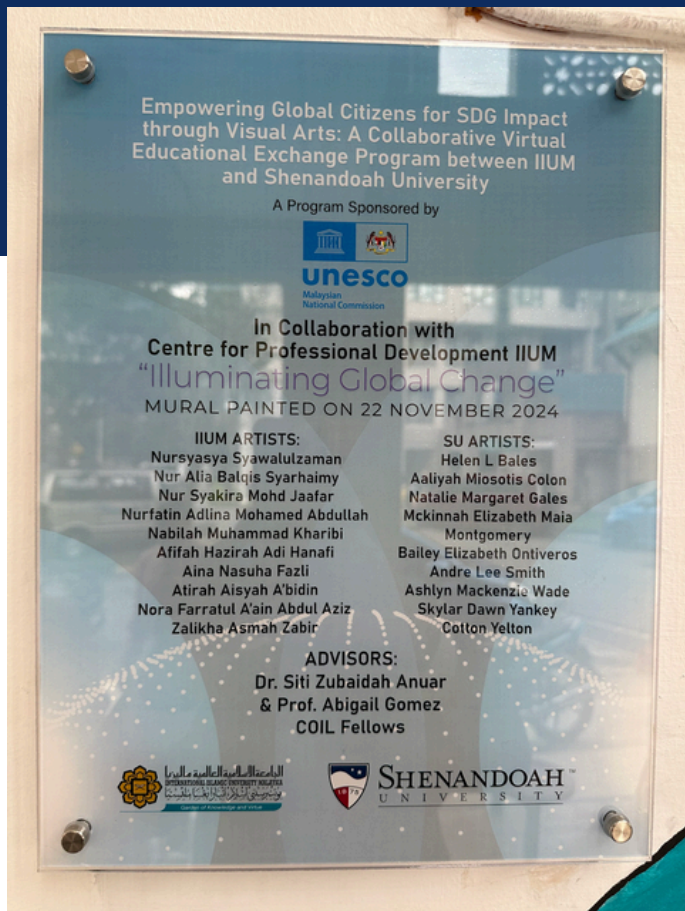
COIL Mural at **Shenandoah University**, United States

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COIL Mural in at the **International Islamic University, Malaysia**

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EXHIBITIONS



Students in COIL Fellow Abigail Gomez's class collaborated with peers in Malaysia and Cuba to create mixed media artworks highlighting UNESCO's sustainable development goals. Many used recyclable materials from their every day lives to create unique, impactful and stunning art.

EXHIBITIONS



RESEARCH PUBLICATION

Shenandoah Associate Professor of FHEA, IEEE & COIL Fellow [Fadi Abuamara](#) publishes his COIL Virtual Exchange on Hybrid Approaches to Phishing Email Detection.



International Journal of Electrical and Computer Engineering (IJECE)

Vol. 15, No. 5, October 2025, pp. 4865~4874

ISSN: 2088-8708, DOI: 10.11591/ijece.v15i5.pp4865-4874

□ 4865

A hybrid approach to phishing email detection: leveraging machine learning and explainable artificial intelligence

Tarek Zidan¹, Fadi Abu-Amara², Ahmad Hasasneh¹, Muath Sawaftah¹, Seth Griner²

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Over 2025, the Barzinji Institute facilitated over ten presentations at various international conferences.



First, Associate Provost Amy Sarch and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Business school Jeff Coker presented at the **Japan Hub for Innovative Global Education (JIGE)**. Amy presented on trends in international education in the US and COIL Virtual Exchange and Jeff on AI in higher education. We want to thank Professor Keiko Ikeda for the invitation and hospitality.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS



Christine Shiau

Executive Director, Stevens Initiative, Aspen Institute



Dr. Younus Mirza

Director, Barzinji Project for International Collaboration to Innovate in Higher Education, Shenandoah University (VA-USA)



Dr. Sawsan Ahmad Jabr Daraiseh

Professor of English Literature and Literary Theory and Criticism, Yarmouk University (Jordan)



Veronica Onorevole

Director for Innovative Global Education Initiatives, AAC&U

REAFFIRMING HIGHER EDUCATION'S
Public Purpose



Director Younus Mirza presented alongside Christine Shiau (Stevens Initiative), Veronica Onorevole (AAC&U) and Sawsan Daraiseh (Yarmouk University) regarding "**Fostering Global Democratic Engagement through VE/COIL: A Partnership Model**". They discussed how our initiatives enhance democratic values and intercultural competencies in global education, highlighting successful partnerships and providing insights into strategic integration within higher education to support global democratic engagement. In particular, Director Younus spoke about our Virtually Going Global Program with Yarmouk University which institutionalized virtual exchange within our First Year Seminar course.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS



Barzinji delegates presented at the [International Virtual Exchange Conference \(IVEC\)](#) in Crete, Greece. The delegation consisted of Jeff Coker, Amy Sarch, Catherine Dunn Shiffman, Vicky Spencer, Sawsan Daraiseh and Younus Mirza and represented the universities of Shenandoah and Yarmouk. The delegation presented on relevant panels related to emerging voices, institutionalizing virtual exchange and mid-career professionals.

HOSTING

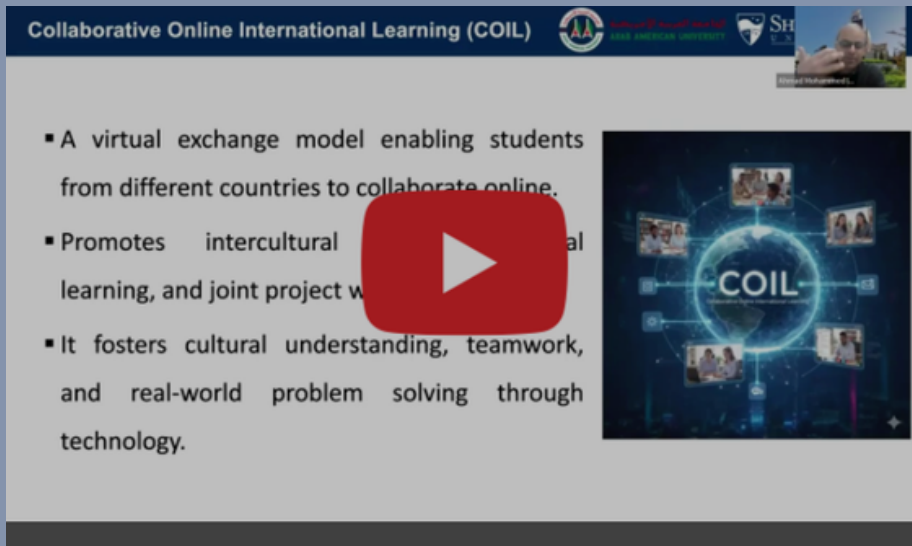


The Barzinji Institute hosted [Nahed Habiballah](#) (center in the picture) from the [Arab American University of Palestine \(AAUP\)](#), who is head of the Conflict Studies Research Center. Nahed attended the International Baccalaureate program on campus where the various Global Citizenship Projects (GCP) are announced. She also met with various COIL fellows and the International Programs Office. Dr. Mohammad F. Obeid helps facilitate the partnership with AAUP.

YOUTUBE CHANNEL

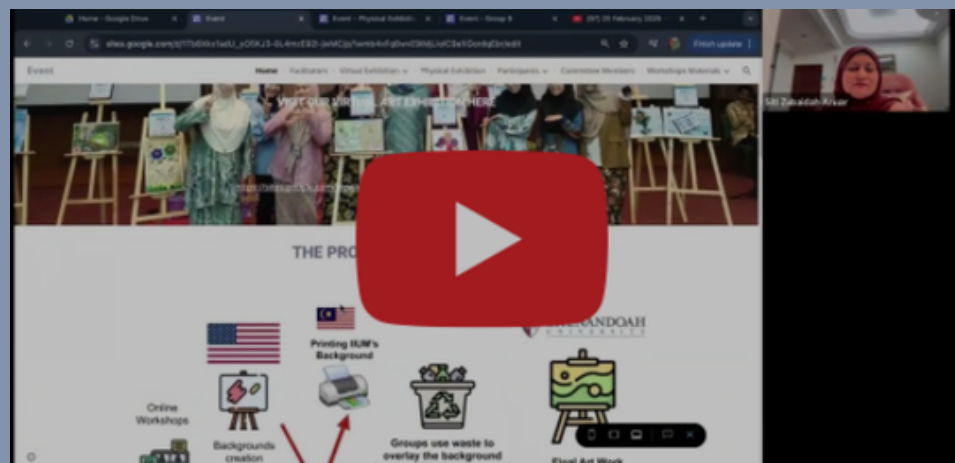

The [Barzinji Institute YouTube Channel](#) grew to over 50 affiliated videos and 80 subscribers with a total of over 10,000 views. The various videos highlight presentations related to COIL and virtual exchange as well as faculty and student work. In particular, we have been organizing a series of webinars that highlight our faculty's and student's work. These webinars have been on AI, research and the Arts.

 **10,000+ VIEWS**



Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

- A virtual exchange model enabling students from different countries to collaborate online.
- Promotes intercultural learning, and joint project work
- It fosters cultural understanding, teamwork, and real-world problem solving through technology.



Event

THE PRO...

Online Workshops

Backgrounds creation

Printing IUM's Background

Groups use waste to overlay the background leaving 50% of background

Final Art Work


UIN Ar-Raniry

COMMUNICATION

The Barzinji Institute [email listserve](#) grows to over 1500 members from around the world. We have also updated our [website](#), and developed a presence on [LinkedIn](#).



BARZINJI INSTITUTE
FOR GLOBAL VIRTUAL LEARNING

 <https://www.su.edu/academics/barzinji-project/>

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