



**PROMOTING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH TRAINING, EDUCATION, TRANSITION
INVESTMENT AND LIVELIHOODS (POTENTIAL)**

**Jimma University
Summary of Rapid Assessment Findings
September 2019**

INTRODUCTION

Brandeis University and its Center for Youth and Communities (CYC) at the Heller School for Social Policy and Management are partnering with Save the Children and six Ethiopian Universities to achieve the following outcomes:¹

Expected Result 1: Capacity of Ethiopian higher education institutions developed to have the capacity to deliver transferable life skills education for their graduates through Career Labs, which were either established or improved.

Expected Result 2: Partnerships are developed between higher education institutes, colleges, and employers.

In July 2019 Brandeis University met with Jimma University (JU) administrators, faculty, staff, students and alums, to understand the university's current capacity to deliver transferable life skills education, the extent to which it can support students' meeting their employment goals, and the ways in which it interacts with local, regional and national employers for its graduates through establishing or improving formal structures and processes for employability development and career readiness. Further, the Brandeis team met with local and regional employers

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE ETHIOPIAN CONTEXT

The Government of Ethiopia laid out an ambitious second phase to its Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) in 2016. The aim is to substantially boost the economic viability of a fast-growing country as noted below and it too is promising:

The major objective of GTP II is to serve as a spring board towards realizing the national vision of becoming a low middle-income country by 2025, through sustaining the rapid, broad based and inclusive economic growth, which accelerates economic transformation and the journey towards the country's Renaissance. Thus, GTP II is primarily considered to be an important milestone towards realizing the national vision. In this context, during the GTP II implementation period, effective public participation in a coordinated and structured manner at all levels is critical to ensuring equitable development and to build developmental political economy. As

¹ From: US Higher Education Institution Sub Award RFA # SC-POTENTIAL-2018-01, p. 1. (Save the Children's POTENTIAL project).

such, GTP II will focus on ensuring rapid, sustainable & broad-based growth through enhancing productivity of agriculture and manufacturing, improving quality of production and stimulating competition in the economy.²

An essential contextual factor in this plan has been investment in universities and technical schools, including construction of numerous new facilities to expand educational opportunities for youth – the backbone of a skilled workforce required to fill the burgeoning number of jobs being created. While there have been numerous successes, a serious challenge has arisen in the ability to build the capacity of these institutions to provide the quality education needed for the demands of the labor market. As the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap³ describes it:

The curricula of HEI are not geared toward the development of employability and other lifelong learning skills among graduates. Universities did not seem having strategies and tactics to prepare programs requiring intensive use of IT for learning purposes. The existing university-industry linkage was found inadequate hence students did not have ample exposure to real-world of work as well as the teaching of practitioners from industry.⁴

Besides, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) World Economic Outlook⁵ points out that Ethiopia's economy and job market had been attracting significant foreign, domestic, and public investment in manufacturing and infrastructure construction and these sectors have shown growth. Another study by the Brookings institution⁶ that supports the IMF findings states Ethiopia's economy had been shifting from the agrarian sector toward the services sector, in particular to construction and manufacturing sub-sectors. It is expected that the majority of future jobs are going to be in educational facilities, construction and construction materials, light manufacturing, tourism and hospitality, services, agriculture and agro-processing.

RAPID ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

This report is based on the five characteristics of institutionalized quality programs at universities. They serve as the lens through which we assessed JU's capacity to support the development of critical employability skills and career pathways of their students. The five characteristics are:

- I. Campus commitment and mission-related to student employability development and career readiness.** A primary component of the institutionalization of student employability development and career readiness is campus-wide commitment and standards that provide meaning, focus, and emphasis for efforts across campus. How narrowly or broadly student employability development and career readiness are defined on a campus will affect

² Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) (2015/16-2019/20). Retrieved from <http://www.mofed.gov.et/documents/10182/12998/GTPII++English+Translation++Final++June+21+2016+%281%29.pdf/40548539-99ce-47db-8b99-44b2b9cc2bf7>

³ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education, Education Strategy Center (ESC). (2018). Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018-30). Retrieved from https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/ethiopia_education_development_roadmap_2018-2030.pdf

⁴ Jimma U. (2018). About Jimma University. Retrieved from <https://www.ju.edu.et/?q=about-jimma-university>.

⁵ International Monetary Fund. African Dept. (2018). The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia: 2018 Article IV Consultation-Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Retrieved from <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2018/12/04/The-Federal-Democratic-Republic-of-Ethiopia-2018-Article-IV-Consultation-Press-Release-Staff-46434>

⁶ Seid, Y., Taffesse, A. S., & Ali, S. N. (2015). Ethiopia: An agrarian economy in transition (No. 2015/154). Brookings working paper. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/ethiopia-an-agrarian-economy-in-transition/>

which campus constituents participate/do not participate, which campus units will provide financial resources and other support, and the degree to which student employability development and career readiness will become part of the campus' institutional fabric (e.g., fully supported programs and services with metrics to measure success and inform continuous improvement).

- 2. Faculty support for and involvement in student employability development and career readiness.** Faculty awareness and support is a necessary component of institutionalizing the development of student employability competencies and career pathways.
- 3. Student support for and involvement in employability development and career readiness.** An essential element of institutionalization is the degree to which students are aware of opportunities/services on campus and are provided opportunities to play a leadership role in the development of their employment competencies and career pathways.
- 4. Employer, TVET, and community partnerships.** An essential element for the institutionalization of student employability development and career readiness is the degree to which the campus nurtures partnerships with TVETs, employers and community representatives to play a role in implementing and advancing strategies and activities on campus or in the community.
- 5. Evidence of institutional support (including student employability development and career readiness facilities).**
In order for student employability development and career readiness to become institutionalized on college and university campuses, the institution must provide substantial resources, support, and leadership toward the effort.

Note that this was a “rapid assessment,” a point-in-time snapshot of the institution. The research team made every attempt to interview a range of administrators, faculty, staff, students, alums, employers, and TVETs, as well as to review available documents. Our report is based on the major themes that emerged through these conversations over the course of our visit at JU, and we view this as a baseline description of JU's capacity to engage in student career development. However, we are mindful of the complexity of universities and their contexts and that we may have omitted points that readers of this report believe are important.

RAPID ASSESSMENT OF JIMMA UNIVERSITY'S CAPACITY

Jimma University's Context

JU has a history of high aspirations and a track record of accomplishments in many areas. Further, the university has new leadership, a President and Vice President of Academic Affairs, which brings new energy and commitment to addressing critical issues regarding the university's health and sustainability.

Previous youth employability assessments indicate that there are barriers to graduates' employability. For instance, Mercy Corps assessment in the Oromia region⁷, found that graduates are have a logistical hindrance such as food, stationary, accommodation and transportation; they are discouraged by what they had described as opaque hiring processes, nepotism and corruption; as well as bureaucratic slowness in the hiring process.

⁷ Mercy Corps. (2018). Youth Barrier Analysis Report and Behavior Change Strategy Description Development Food Security Activity.

However, the Mercy Corps assessment also noted that the hindrances affect the genders differently, as males focus more on the challenges of hiring process, while the females focus on logistics.

Even as employers become more highly engaged with JU and hopefully scale up the number of their job openings, there would be insufficient jobs in the labor market for the year-over-year increased number of JU graduates.

Jimma University: Great History and a Bright Future

Jimma University (JU) is Ethiopia's first Innovative Community-Oriented Education Institution of higher learning. It offers various programs and courses of study, which lead toward BSc, MSc and Ph.D. degrees in different fields (Public Health and Medical Sciences, Agriculture, Engineering, and Natural and Social Sciences). The institution was established in December 1999 following the amalgamation of the Jimma College of Agriculture (founded in 1952) and the Jimma Institute of Health Sciences (founded in 1983). JU is the largest and nationally first-ranked university in Ethiopia with over 40,000 students, 3,000 faculty, and 60 departments. The university was established with a vision to be the leading public premier in the country, renown in Africa and recognized in the world. JU is a pioneer in sanitation training in collaboration with national and international partners, which includes the Federal Ministry of Health.

-- Jimma U. (2018). About Jimma University. Retrieved from <https://www.ju.edu.et/?q=about-jimma-university>

Characteristics of Jimma University's Capacity

This report is organized around the five characteristics discussed above, and our perception of what they look like at JU. This is followed by a discussion of perceived barriers and challenges to initiating a career center, the assets and leveraging opportunities Jimma has for initiating and strengthening student employability development and career readiness, support for young women, employer partnerships, and the ways in which Brandeis/CYC is prepared to support JU.

I. Campus commitment and mission related to student employability development and career readiness.

Student employability as a clear focus for JU began two years ago because of three clear contextual realities: the difficulty JU graduates faced in finding jobs, the explosion in the number of students graduating from universities across the country, and students' lack of practical job skills. JU responded to these challenges by creating a strategic plan for the Career Development and Entrepreneurship Centre (CDEC) in 2018. The vision (lightly edited) articulated in the plan is:

To be a model career centre among higher educational institutions of Ethiopia which produces the most employable graduates in Africa, making JU an innovative and entrepreneurial university and moving JU towards being a premier world-class university by 2025.

- 2018 Strategic Plan of Career Development and Entrepreneurship Centre of Jimma University

The plan lays out extensive strategic themes and objectives and includes indicators for assessing progress through monitoring and evaluation. Implementation, however, proved to be challenging. With part-time staffing and few resources, only a small portion of the plan was put into action with a small percentage of 4th-year students benefiting from very basic training and coaching intended to help them secure jobs.

JU has new leadership devoted to student employability development and career readiness and this, coupled with the government's mandate that public universities focus on preparation of

graduates for employment, supports the commitment by the university to be a “leader among peers in addressing youth employment.”

2. Faculty support for and involvement in student employability development and career readiness.

JU has strong faculty champions on campus for making student employability development and career readiness a priority. There is a deep understanding among all faculty and staff interviewed that employability development and career readiness must be an essential element of students’ academic education and overall experience at JU. Many expressed an understanding that structural change is necessary and that they would support it.

3. Student support for and involvement in employability development and career readiness.

Student union leaders are involved with the CDEC. However, with the low percentage of students being trained, and only in their 4th year, student engagement overall is low.

4. Employer, TVET and community partnerships.

Employer engagement across JU colleges and the Jimma Institute of Technology (JIT) is quite variable, and in most cases not institutionalized. Formal agreements are being developed in the hospitality industry and with other specific employers, but these are largely very recent. While the CDEC, in collaboration with ethiojobs/Dereja.com, conducted a job fair in June 2018 on the main campus with more than 10 local, national and international businesses participating, there was not a job fair in 2019.

There is reportedly a low rate of hiring engineering and technology students and a high rate for health students – this could be due to labor market demands, but raises the question about cultivation of employers for specific professions being trained by each of the colleges.

JU has MOUs with some TVETs (i.e. technology transfer, scholarships for outstanding students, internships, university use of TVET facilities). The TVETs are an employer for graduates of the [College of Education and Behavioral Science](#).

Employers reported their need for graduates to have more foundational skills and to be trained in market-driven programs. We also observed that the gender gap is much larger in the private sector, hiring more males, while the gender gap in public sector is decreasing with the hiring of more females.

Employers reported that JU students are graduating with limited employability skills, leaving a gap in what employers want and expect. Employers identified the following skills required to be successful in their environments: practical application skills for the hard skills students learn; transferable life skills, like communication, teamwork, customer service, self-confidence, leadership, taking responsibility for their own lives; basic work skills, like punctuality, attitude, time management, commitment, business ethics, follow-through, and appropriate attire.

Moreover, employers reported that there is a perception that “office jobs” are believed to be the best jobs among graduates. In addition, they said their experience with graduates is that they prefer to stay or migrate to big cities and the capital to find jobs.

Further, some employers stated that once graduates have jobs, many are not equipped to respond to jobs that will constantly evolve, resulting in their inability to grow into new

expectations and types of work. Further, graduates typically don't understand the emerging economic reality of Ethiopia (from agricultural to industrial), hence don't have a sense of their futures in it and how they can contribute.

5. Evidence of institutional support (including employability development and career readiness facilities).

University leaders articulated a strong desire to see student career development integrated into the university curriculum and other student experiences. The Vice President for Academic Affairs is committed to developing a new strategic plan for student career development in September 2019. He has already assessed the curriculum in terms of incorporating internships and plans to initiate changes during 2019-2020.

In July 2019, the JU CDEC had a Deputy Director (6 hrs. /wk.), secretary (FT) and dedicated, but inadequately unfurnished space (3 rooms and the Deputy Director's office), a few computers, and 4 volunteer trainers and counsellors (2 of whom were active). Reportedly, beginning in 2019-2020, additional staff and other resources will be deployed to this effort.

Dereja.com is the major partner for the Center for training staff and graduating students of JIT with the financial support of German GIZ (English: German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH). The CDEC has used Dereja.com modules to train 4th year students in development of CVs and how to prepare for interviews. Other modules are available but are reported to be expensive.

LOOKING AHEAD

While we have listed many of our observations above, we acknowledge that some of these may be incomplete due to the brief nature of our visit. Linking graduates to employment is a complex task that needs both policy and practice shifts within and outside the university and to that extent, Brandeis University is interested in partnering with your university to build upon the assets that already exist on your campus and work with you to eliminate or minimize the barriers that you may face as you deepen and grow your career development capacity. The following section lists those assets and obstacles as we currently understand them.

As we move forward together, we will continue to learn from you, create opportunities for you to learn from the other five universities partnering in this initiative, as well as offer suggestions for innovations in policy and practice that will strengthen your capacity to place increasing numbers of Ethiopian university graduates in employment and entrepreneurship.

I. Assets and leveraging opportunities for strengthening focus on student employability development and career readiness programs and services

JU has a unique asset in its long-time formal commitment to the community. Community-Based Education (CBE)⁸ courses are required of all students for all four years of their university experience. The original design was to have students spend their first-year learning about community engagement and development and design of projects to meet community needs, the second and third years working under faculty supervision with community groups to identify needs and move to plan development, and the fourth year acquiring funding to implement the

⁸ It was introduced as a means of achieving educational relevance to community needs and consequently of implementing a community-oriented education program. Ferede, B., Melesse, K., Ferede, T., Alemayehu, E., & Dejene, T. (2015). The Inclusion of Community-Based Education in to Jimma University's Curricula: An Exploratory Investigation. *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences*, 10(1), 1-31.

project. Currently, due to the increase in the size of the student body and lack of adequate resources, the fourth year now requires a presentation of the project. Students who enter the master's degree program actually do the implementation. This reportedly has led to "community fatigue" and frustration with a process that does not net the results expected after significant community investment.

JU's approach to CBE provides an excellent opportunity for embedding critical knowledge and skill development through experiential education into the academic curriculum; and important because it is required of all students over the course of all four years.

2. Perceived barriers and challenges to initiating, developing, and sustaining student employability development and career readiness programs and services

Generally speaking, interviewees noted that there is no consistent attention to student employability development and career readiness at JU – attention appears to "come and go." They also reported that there is a lack of awareness in the university as a whole regarding career development. In addition to the very limited training of 4th year students, they noted virtually non-existent post-graduation/alumni support, such as coaching and mentoring. Establishing a feasible infrastructure for employability development and career readiness and a cohesive plan for engaging all of its students, as well as building the staff needed and their capacity, as well as adequate facilities for coaching and training are clear challenges.

3. Support for Young Women

JU has been committed to the support and education of young women for more than 20 years. According to the JU website,⁹ "Increasing female leadership is ... seen in the institution's strategic planning, and a number of leadership positions at Jimma University are held by women as well. Efforts towards further diversifying and increasing the number of women leaders on campus are always at the center of institutional development planning."

JU's Office of Women's and Youth Affairs (OWYA) has a director and is integrated throughout the university with a structure for implementation and accountability designed to ensure young women are fully engaged in university life and opportunities. There is a coordinator in each college who is responsible for overseeing the gender plan and for reporting back to the director.

While female students have access to "holistic, personalized support throughout their education," the primary focus appears to be on 1st year students who participate in an intensive first semester orientation program and are offered tutorials for each of their classes. Additionally, the OWYA has funds for students' basic needs, educational supplies, sexual health related trainings and scholarships for low-income women. There is no specific career development focus for young women, however, "programs have ... been created to empower female students economically. Female students who have financial concerns are given access to jobs that prevent financial issues from interfering with their studies."

The infrastructure model created for the OWYA is another design feature that can be advantageous to the Career Lab's success, especially if combined with the experiential education approach of CBE.

⁹ <https://www.ju.edu.et/?q=women-and-youth-affairs-office>



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The desire to create state-of-the-art employability development and career readiness programs and services at JU that are a model for higher education institutions in Ethiopia is clear and robust. To be maximally effective, there should be a systematic, cohesive approach to student employability development and career readiness, with a well-defined structure that builds on JU's existing strengths and potential and does the following:

Institutionalizes Student Employability Development and Career Readiness

- Builds on critical practices that are crucial to adequately prepare students starting from 1st year and moving through graduation, develops a plan to design and implement these practices, and then systematizes and makes them cohesive. The Center should add value to the students and the university and be knowledge-based.
- Provides an umbrella for all university career-related development experiences, such as practical application (innovation and incubation) labs, community services, transferable life skills training, career counseling, etc. This type of focus includes training teachers and university instructors to use experiential learning methods and overhauling the academic curriculum to build a practical application and transferable life skills – the specific skills employers need – into each course.
- Builds linkages between the OWYA and the Center so both can leverage each other for maximum impact.

Strengthens CDEC Programming

- Develops student employability development and career readiness programming that spans the full trajectory of a student's experience at the university – starting with career interest inventory and other modules at the start of their academic tenure and build throughout the three to five years with growing depth and intensity of work readiness skill-development and training. Provide stand-alone employability development and career readiness training, as well as skills development integrated into the academic curriculum to help students see the connection between their area of study, interest, and talents, and career choices.
- Locates the CDEC in a space that is appropriate for the size of the student population. Provides an annual budget as well as adequate resources for staffing, state of the art computers, connectivity, job-search resources, online learning tools, and resources. Creates awareness of the CDEC on campus with vibrant and ongoing programming and through peer ambassadors. Provides adequate staffing for the employability development and career readiness function.
- Given the gap between numbers of jobs needed and numbers of jobs available, develops and provides robust entrepreneurial skill development courses and training to all students. Include business incubation capacity, trainings on business financing, market analysis, and development.

Engages Faculty

- Expands the mandate for faculty to see their role as not only providing academic skills but also helping students connect to post-university employment or livelihood generating activities. To achieve this, build the internal capacity of the university faculty, staff, and advanced students to provide employability development and career readiness guidance and training within their respective colleges and institutes. Provide peer mentoring, peer and faculty/staff-led workshops, internships, job shadowing, guest visitors from local and regional industry, and co-curricular opportunities for students to build self-awareness and teamwork skills.

Engages Students

- Expands engagement of student leaders as advocates and other students in roles such as peer mentors.

Establishes and Maintains Productive Partnerships

- Strengthens university-employer partnerships. These partnerships should have clear expectations and be able to shape and enhance each other's domain through mutually agreed upon activities (e.g., in-service training, meaningful internships, teaching classes at JU, job fairs). Further, employers need to be educated about the benefits of hiring university graduates.
- Creates actionable MOUs for University-TVET partnerships to enhance the capacity of both institutions.
- Addresses policies at local and national levels impacting student employability development, career readiness and outcomes to provide a foundation for excellence and student success.

Uses Data for Evidence of Success

- Collects and analyzes quantitative and qualitative data on student placement, time to placement, retention in employment, etc. to launch a cycle of continuous improvement that provides feedback on the employability development and career readiness practices on campus.

JU has the opportunity to build on the momentum at the national level, as well as that which is evident within the institution, to strengthen and/or build commitment and expand leadership for change. Embedding employability development and career readiness deeply into the fabric and life of JU will require fresh thinking, courageous action, and a commitment to the long-term, steady implementation of the envisioned plan.

THE WAY FORWARD

Given the urgency of the challenge of youth employment in Ethiopia, and the imperative JU has for addressing student employability development and career readiness, Brandeis University's Center for Youth and Communities (CYC) and Save the Children (SC) are offering to join with JU leadership to develop a feasible mechanism for moving forward and discuss the recommendations of the rapid assessment. We are proposing working deeply with select university Presidents, each of whom understands the necessity and role of higher education institutions in ensuring that graduates are poised to join the new economy.

Launching and Supporting the Presidents' Compact

CYC and SC with interested university Presidents will launch a Presidents' Compact on October 16, 2019. The goal is to provide a sustainable vehicle to support student employability development and career readiness at Jimma and five other universities. The Compact can be a very visible designation on campus websites and in materials showing that JU's graduates are prepared to be part of Ethiopia's economic growth.

This academic year (2019-2010) is the pilot and launch of the Compact, and JU's President will be invited to be one of the "Founding Members."

The Compact will meet universities where they are in their capacity development, beginning with the rapid assessment, followed by customized action planning. Once JU joins, the President and designated faculty and staff will be able to participate in:

- Direct assistance in developing or enhancing university employability development and career readiness programming
- Professional development of employability development and career readiness faculty and staff (training, education, coaching) on site and online
- Community of Practice among Presidents' at the national level

- Cross(inter) institutional peer exchanges
- Guidance for strengthening employer partnerships for student labor market opportunities
- Technical assistance for monitoring and evaluation
- Assessment of the institutionalization of career lab (reaching a level of distinction)
- Development conferences in Addis Ababa with the faculty and staff of Brandeis University and sessions led by Ethiopian university members
- In April 2020, the pilot year will culminate in a Presidents' delegation visit to Brandeis University, Massachusetts, USA, for a learning exchange with USA university leaders and employer partners

CYC and SC are poised to support Jimma University in all phases of its work to strengthen employability development and career readiness. As we say at Brandeis, "Enough Is Known for Action." We invite you to join us!