

Meet Orly Sela, Leading Oranim Faculty in International Partnership Promoting Teaching Excellence

Teaching excellence in higher education is crucial to the success of students' learning. Orly Sela is working with international partners to promote teaching excellence in Israel through the Erasmus+ TeachEx project.



Orly Sela is working together with an international team of Israeli and European institutions of higher education on TeachEx, the Erasmus+ project for promoting teaching excellence in Israeli higher education. The ultimate goal is to make sustainable long-term change in the Israeli higher education system by creating a more effective teaching and learning environment for students and faculty.

Sela is a member of the English faculty and Director of Final Projects and Theses. She became involved in TeachEx because of her role as the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at Oranim College. In this interview, Sela shares her experiences working on TeachEx and her vision for the internationalization of Oranim.

Promoting Teaching Excellence

With the support of Oranim, TeachEx has succeeded in establishing Centers for Teaching Excellence in all fifteen institutions that are members of the TeachEx consortium. TeachEx is now planning a three day “Train the Trainers” workshop for this winter, in which faculty from all the partnering institutions will gather to share what they have worked on. The goal of the workshop is for faculty to be given tools and ideas to take back to their home institutions to use in training other faculty members. Seven faculty members from Oranim plan to attend the workshop, which will lead to wide-ranging impact on teaching at Oranim.

Sela is active in two initiatives as part of TeachEx: mobile learning and diversity. In the first initiative, TeachEx is developing a M-Learning training kit which will help faculty gain skills for integrating mobile devices into their teaching. The goal is to make learning more active, authentic, constructive, cooperative, personalized, and intentional.

In the diversity initiative, faculty will learn how to use different teaching methods and materials in order to ensure that diverse students are engaged in the learning process. Sela and her partners are developing an online course for faculty all over Israel on student diversity that will be open and asynchronous.

To give a taste of the course, Sela describes the opening lesson. The lesson will explore student diversity in the context of human rights, as every student has a right for education. In one exercise, faculty will compare the Israeli bill of human rights with their institution's mission statement, to see how the mission statement reflects the bill of human rights.

Sela is also co-editing a book on innovative approaches to academic teaching and learning. Chapters will be written by contributors involved in Teachex and another Erasmus+ project.

Erasmus+

Oranim College is proud to be part of TeachEx, its first Erasmus+ project. Erasmus+ is a European Union program that supports international partnerships in education, training, and youth work. Oranim is a partner in a consortium of fifteen institutions of higher education in Israel and Europe, led by IDC in Herzliya. Erasmus+ gave the consortium a three-year grant to implement their plan for TeachEx.

Erasmus+ is providing Oranim College with transformative opportunities for developing international partnerships. Since winning the grant for TeachEx, Oranim College has become a partner in two other grant winning Erasmus+ capacity building projects, and partnered with four European institutions to facilitate student and faculty exchanges in the framework of Erasmus+ mobility programs.

Internationalization of Oranim

Sela describes her vision for the internationalization of Oranim. She explains: "We have a lot to give, as well as a lot to learn. In general, I believe in cooperation with other institutions and with other people at any level... We learn from what other people do well, and we help teach them whatever we are doing well." Her aim is "much more cooperation, much more opening up of Oranim to the world."

"Our main agenda, which is education, is an international one," Sela asserts. As such, just as every researcher reads articles from overseas to learn as much as they can about their subject, so too every educator should learn as much as they can from educators in Israel and abroad about education. The more educators learn about their field, the better choices they will be able to make.

In the future, Sela sees faculty and students coming and going frequently between Oranim and international institutions of higher education. She sees many joint online courses developed in cooperation between Oranim and international institutions.

In order for this to happen, it is crucial that both students and faculty improve their English language skills. Sela recommends requiring every student to take at least two courses, ideally in their area of study, taught in the English language.

Sela concludes: "The opening of the International School was a very important step and I commend Oranim for doing it... I am very happy to be a part of it."