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Go Green on Campus Project: A Collaborative International Student Project

Prof. Patricia Fox, Indiana University Purdue University, Indianapolis

Professor Patricia Fox is a Clinical Assistant Professor in the Department of Technology Leadership and Communication in the Purdue School of Engineering and Technology at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Pat has been a member of the faculty for over 32 years. She has previously served as Associate Chair and Associate Dean in the School. Pat teaches leadership, ethics, sustainability, and study abroad courses. She has held a number of leadership roles in the American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) including three terms on the Board as well as Chair of Engineering Technology Council. Pat is a Fellow of ASEE. Her research interests include sustainability and study abroad education.

Mrs. Ergem Senyuva
Mr. Joe Spaulding, Indiana University Purdue University, Indianapolis

Go Green on Campus: A Collaborative International Student Project

Abstract

In the summer of 2014, a young entrepreneur and the founder of Yesilist.com, a Turkish website created to raise awareness and generate a market to increase the demand for sustainable business practices and smart consumer choices in Turkey[1], developed an innovative student project. The project convened students from several U.S. universities together with students from various Turkish universities in Istanbul to spread awareness of global environmental issues on Turkish campuses.

The project called, 'Go Green on Campus' recruited students who had been leaders on their own university campus in some type of sustainable project or action. Thirteen students were selected from three U.S. universities and 50 were selected from five Turkish universities. The project was funded by the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul and sponsored by Yesilist.com and Koç University in Istanbul.

The goal of the 'Go Green on Campus' project was to have students from ages 18-25 from the U.S. and Turkey collaborate and examine environmental problems from different cultural perspectives and fields of study then create a project that would have a lasting impact on the participating Turkish campuses. This project showed that when you equip students with the right educational tools and motivation to create and execute sustainable projects that achieve environmental and social impact on their campus the success rate is remarkable.

Introduction

Turkey has many environmental issues and problems, many of which have a global impact. These include but are not limited to: access to clean water; air pollution; soil degradation; deforestation; climate change; and loss of biodiversity. Many organizations give Turkey a failing grade when it comes to environmental protection.[2] Rebecca Harms, the European Parliament (EP) Greens Co-chairman, said in response to a growing concern to exploit the remaining green space in Istanbul for economic development, "Turkey's environmental problems are as worrying as its problems in domestic politics."[3] The Turkish Republic Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicates on its website that, "Addressing the global environmental problems that threaten our living planet requires national efforts as well as international collaboration on both bilateral and multilateral level and the active participation of all members of the international community."[4]

The world is facing many global challenges. Several of these have familiar themes defined by national and international organizations. The challenges are daunting and somewhat overwhelming in nature. Like Turkey they include but are not limited to: global warming; climate change; soil degradation; loss of biodiversity; water shortages; deforestation; population growth; and economic disparity. Countless natural resources in our world are in rapid decline or are already extinct due to population overgrowth, poor resource management, or pure ignorance of the issues. If something is not done to address the global challenges today, there may not be a future for upcoming generations.

Jared Diamond a Professor of Geography at the University of California, Los Angeles and Pulitzer Prize author said in his book, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive,* "The environmental problems facing us today include the same eight that undermined past societies, plus four new ones: human caused climate change, buildup of toxic chemical in the environment, energy shortages and full human utilization of the Earth's photosynthetic capacity."[5]

Alan Kay, a well-known computer scientist said, "The best way to predict the future is to invent it."[6] What a great way to look at global challenges; if we want a better future and solve the global challenges then we better invent a way to make it happen. Effecting change and making a difference in solving our global challenges will best be accomplished by working together to invent ways to change the way we currently operate in the world. We need to think like the Iroquois Indians. The Constitution of Iroquois Nations has inspired many organizations to duplicate their view of future generations, "In all of your deliberations in the Confederate Council, in your efforts at law making, in all your official acts, self-interest shall be cast into oblivion. Cast not over your shoulder behind you the warnings of the nephews and nieces should they chide you for any error or wrong you may do, but return to the way of the Great Law, which is just and right. Look and listen for the welfare of the whole people and have always in view not only the present but also the coming generations, even those whose faces are yet beneath the surface of the ground – the unborn of the future Nation."[7] The Iroquois' promise of making decisions with the welfare and well being of least seven generations into the future led to a sustainable life style, valued natural resources for the sake of the current generation.

Nations, corporations, and individuals all over the world are taking up the challenge to make a difference. For example, in the U.S. where politics and lobbing can play a large role in proliferating unfounded assumptions that environmental regulations are bad for jobs and the economy. Two hundred twenty three companies signed a letter in November 2014 supporting the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) draft of a carbon pollution standard for existing power plants.[8] The supporters of the letter were from major Fortune 500 and brand name companies, which indicated, "As businesses concerned about the immediate and long term implication of climate change, we strongly support the principles behind the draft carbon pollution standards for existing power plants."[8] The proposed new EPA ruling is significant and calls for a reduction of carbon pollution by 30% from 2005 levels. Nestle, a company who has been in business for 148 years indicated that it wants to be around for another 148 years; however, they indicated this cannot happen without a "stable environment to operate in."[8] These organizations recognize the challenges for a sustainable world in the U.S. and are leading by example.

Germany is an excellent example of a country that has taken on environmental issues for over forty years, "Over the last 40 years, all levels of government in Germany have retooled policies to promote growth that is more environmentally sustainable. Germany's experiences can provide useful lessons for the United States and other nations as policymakers consider options for "green" economic transformation."[9] Germany has proven that a push towards a green economy can work, "Fortunately, the green transformation of economies is no longer a theoretical concept. Several nations have put the green economy to the test. While far from being the only country to venture down this path, Germany has earned wide recognition for its successful alignment of prosperous and sustainable growth. Unlike many of its European neighbors, Germany has emerged from the recent recession with a robust economy, thanks in large part to flourishing

exports. Germany has a dominant market share in various green technologies as well as a substantial part of its workforce employed in the environmental sector."[9]

Even Individuals are also taking action around the world to make the world more sustainable. In the summer of 2014, a young entrepreneurial and the founder of Yesilist.com[1], developed an innovative sustainable project. The project brought students from several U.S. universities together with students from various Turkish universities in Istanbul to spread awareness of global environmental issues on Turkish campuses.

The concept of sustainable campuses in Turkey is still rather new. Internationally, sustainability on campuses has taken hold since 1990 when Jean Mayer, the President of Tufts University, convened twenty-two university leaders in Talloires, France to draft a document that outlined key actions that universities must take towards creating a sustainable future. What is known as the Talloires Declaration founded the groundwork for describing the vision of sustainability through higher education. Currently, 350 university presidents and chancellors at institutions in over 40 countries across five continents have signed the Talloires Declaration. While it may be more symbolic than action oriented, it has put the concept of sustainability on university campuses and on the agenda for higher education professionals.[10]

Twenty years after the Talliores Conference, Turkish universities are paying attention to sustainability on university campuses. During the last four years, Turkish universities especially those five that participated in the Go Green Project have launched many sustainability type projects including building LEED certified buildings on their campuses, endorsed student sponsored sustainability projects, developed sustainability centers on campuses, etc.

Go Green Student Project

Sixty-three university students from various disciplines participated in a three-day workshop in Istanbul, Turkey in August 2014. The 'Go Green on Campus' recruited students who had been leaders on their own university campus in some type of sustainable project or action. Thirteen students were selected from three U.S. universities and 50 were selected from five Turkish universities. The project was funded by the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul and sponsored by Yesilist.com and Koç University in Istanbul. Students studied leading sustainable issues at the workshop ultimately to challenge their team to bring social and environmental change to their respective campuses. Students were put into teams based on a chosen criteria. The teams were to develop a specific project that would have social and environmental impact on their Turkish campuses.

Student teams consisted of both U.S. and Turkish students, team members developed ideas for their own projects to execute on the Turkish campuses. Based on the success of project implementation and the extent of collaborative effort, one team's project will be selected as winner of the challenge. The winning team will be sent to one of the three U.S. participating schools during the summer of 2015 to experience a sustainability workshop and to reunite with some of the U.S. students.

The workshop covered a large amount of information in a short period of time, in order to effectively educate participants about Turkey and the surrounding region's environmental concerns, and encourage international and local dialogue between the students. There were mini

workshops, guest speakers and team activities included in the workshop. The following educational topics were incorporated in the three-day workshop:

• Waste: recycle, up-cycle and re-use
• Sustainable food
• Ecological architecture- permaculture (ecological design) on campus
• Sustainable transportation

The project had many goals. The ultimate goal of this project was to further develop future global green leaders -- students with a proactive, collaborative spirit and a passion for green topics and the environment. The major goal of project was to have students from ages 18 to 25 from the U.S. and Turkey to collaborate and investigate environmental and social problems from different cultural perspectives and fields of study. The primary goal however, was for the student teams to collaborate to develop a project that would bring sustainability awareness to students, faculty and staff at their respective campuses.

The student teams implemented their projects on their respective campuses during the fall semester and document growth through social media. There is a short seven minute You Tube video of the workshop experience, which can be seen here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pY89FGS4wzs. In addition, updates on the teams can be found at the following Go Green Student Project website http://www.studentsgogreenproject.com.

Student Go Green Project – You Tube Video

The Student Teams

For the workshop, the students were divided into teams by school and their preferred area of: permaculture, mobility, food or consumption. (U.S students were placed equally among the teams by their preferred area.) Of the 50 participating Turkish students, there were 10 each from Boğaziçi University, Koç University, Istanbul Technical University, Özyeğin University and Sabancı University. Of the Turkish students participating, 21 are engineering majors (mechanical engineers, environmental engineers, industrial engineers and naval engineering) and one of the U.S. students was a mechanical engineering student. Approximately one-third of the students participating were engineering students. The other team members have the following majors.

Majors/Disciplines Represented by Students	
Architecture	Environmental Technology
Biological Engineering	Genetics
Biology	Industrial Engineering
Business Administration	International Relations
Chemical Engineering	International Trade
Chemistry	Law
Civil Engineering	Marine Engineering
Comparative Human Development	Mechanical Engineering
Computer Science	Molecular Biology and Genetics
Earthquake Engineering	Philosophy
Economics	Political Science
Electrical Engineering	Psychology
Environmental Engineering	Public Policy
Environmental Studies	Shipbuilding and Ocean Engineering

Initially, there were 15 teams established at the workshop. Of the 15 teams, 5 teams chose not to continue with their projects due to lack of commitment and/or lack of time due to their busy schedules in school after the workshop was completed.

Below are descriptions of the remaining 10 teams that continue to work on their projects: [11]

1. The "FoodSlowers" team is from Koç University. This team is working on multiple projects relating to the "slow food" concept. They are introducing the concept of "slow food" to their peers in order to be more conscience of food choices in adequate amounts and be aware of food waste. One of the goals for the FoodSlowers team is to place doggie bags at different points around their campus to make sure that students don't waste food. The team's intention is to eliminate food waste. The team also plans to have left over food in the cafeteria sent to animal shelters to feed homeless animals. In addition, the team is holding several cooking classes on campus with a dietitian who will teach the community how to eat consciously. The team is having a farmers market on campus and selling items like jam to provide funding for the doggie bags. In addition, the team is offering services to their peers on how to take care for their bodies without going to a gym via other activities.

2. The "OzU Mobility" team is from Özyeğin University located in Çekmeköy, a suburb of Istanbul. The team's goal is to increase sustainable accessibility (mobility) to their university by providing more efficient bus system for students and creating a carpooling platform website for students, staff and faculty at Özyeğin University. This team learned in the beginning that they needed to work with other groups (student union, campus leaders and commercial organizations) to make their project work and therefore had to become flexible with their project. They developed and implemented a student questionnaire about carpooling. In addition, they developed carpooling suppliers and users guidelines. The team had some success after the first meeting with officials they were able to get four express busses from the University

to Altunizade. The team is working with Istanbul Transportation Manager for arranging IETT buses in the same manner. In addition, the team is working on its own carpooling app but is also supporting the Volt carpooling activity as well.

3. The 'BounToGreen" team is from Boğaziçi University. This team's goal is to show their peers that they can safely recycle electronic waste and in the process the team found a way to save water on campus. The team signed an agreement with a company to provide e-waste boxes on campus for the exchange of the electronic material in the boxes. The company provides censored taps, which will save water on campus for exchange for the e-waste. For every one ton of material, the university will receive two censored taps. In the beginning, the team decided to have an "acquaintances meetings" to inform others and get feedback about the project. The engineering students were so interested, that the team put together a tour of the recycling factory. The team has reached out to local businesses and they are participating as well donating their e-waste to the project. The BounToGreen team is proud that they are saving electronic waste that would normally go into the trash and pollute the soil, which in turn pollutes food and eventually humans. Most of all, BounToGreen team has expanded into their community of believers to other students, faculty, friends, and family and it continues to grow.

"BounToGreen" Recycle Boxes for Electronic Waste

4. The "ITU Permaculture Club" team is from Istanbul Technical University. This team is made up of all engineering students from Istanbul Technical University. This team's purpose is to create a platform to develop an awareness of permaculture on campus and organize training for students, faculty and staff who are interested in this type of work. The team decided to develop a club as their platform to develop the awareness for permaculture. The club has had several events, which have been very successful including talks and movies, such as the showing of "An Inconvenient Truth."

5. The "Green SU" team is from Sabanci University (SU). This team's project is to make compost from food waste on campus to be used as fertilizer. There was also need to reduce cost on fertilizer for green areas on campus. The team's objectives are to make use of food waste; lessen the amount of garbage on campus; produce good quality fertilizer; start a new garden; harvest fruits; and offer their products to the

elderly. The Green SU team's long terms goals are to eliminate food waste; eliminate the need to purchase fertilizers; have a fruit garden; and produce and consume their own fruits and vegetables. So far the Green SU team has been successful with their first batch of compost!

6. The "PermaKUlture" team is from Koç University. The team's project is to create a school tradition with permaculture, which can be integrated into student life to make students life more sustainable. The PermaKUlture team analyzed the challenges on their campus and looked at the Mavramoloz Forest that surrounds the Koç University campus. The team felt that there was a need to communicate facts about the ecological and social environment to their peers, especially in light of the fact that the forest is being threatened. Therefore, by establishing Koç University Permaculture Initiative the team will organize the awareness raising, capacity and community building activities based on permaculture principles. The team is currently raising awareness about the biodiversity on the campus.

7. The "Bottlebee" team is from Istanbul Technical University. The team's goal is to bring an awareness of the importance of recycling water bottles to their campus. The team conducted a survey about the use of plastic bottles to students, 170 students replied. With the results of the survey, the team will supply recycling bins in places students suggested. The survey did raise awareness of the major waste problem.

8. The "SUgoesGreen" team is from Sabancı University. The team project is to bring awareness for recycling paper on campus. Even though there are a number of recycling bins on campus, they are not used efficiently by students. So the SUgoesGreen team wants to inspire students to be aware of the recycling efforts and to participate. The team put extra boxes for paper waste on campus and made larger signs. The team also organized a summit on social entrepreneurship. This team also made things from the waste paper to show that the paper could be up-cycled. The team also brought awareness to their campus about soil degradation. This is especially important for Turkey for the tea industry.

9. The "Wall-efy" team is from Özyeğin University. This team already has a very sustainable university, however they still had an issue with students throwing away water bottles instead of recycling them. The team worked with other groups on campus and one of the international students designed a box for the recycle bottles. This team enlisted the music club to come up with a recycle song and the Technology and Robotics Clubs to work on a counter system for the box. The counter and light and music will be installed for 2015!

Wall-efy Recycle Box

10. The "Mobility" team is from Istanbul Technical University. This team is concerned about the number of cars that are on campus and the carbon release of the cars. This team would like to reduce the number of cars that are used on campus. The team wants to encourage the use of public transportation to campus and to bring awareness about carbon that is released by driving a car. The team wants to reward students with a cup of coffee for walking instead of driving. The team calculated the amount of emissions of carbon for the number of cars on the campus for one year on the Ayazağa Campus (90 tons) and offset the emission for one year.

Evaluation, Presentations and Results

Students were given an eight-question satisfaction survey to complete after the workshop. Fifty-eight students (Turkish and American) answered an eight-question survey. The questions were given a 1 to 5 scoring scale with 5 being the most satisfied. Below is a chart that lists the average score for each of the eight questions for all students that answered.

Questions	Average
1 My skills have improved thanks to the SGG program	3.43
2 The information presented was useful & interesting	3.71
3 Information was well organized	3.62
4 There was adequate time for interacting with other students	3.97
5 Overall performance of trainers	4.07
6 Preparedness of trainers	4.17
7 Quality of location and facilities	4.42
8 Overall satisfaction with program	3.98

After the workshop and when the teams began to develop their projects, most of the teams involved other individuals, groups, or companies on and off campus. The teams received more advice and assistance on sustainability type issues to support their project from faculty advisors or administrators. The teams also worked with outside companies that also assisted in their efforts to advance the team's environmental and social projects. Many teams learned that they must have patience when working through their problems and projects. Dealing with bureaucracy on campus and having to work with other groups inside and outside the university was not always easy. Patience is a quality that many students learned through struggling to start their projects. Teams also learned how to work out problems or solve problems related to their projects through negotiating.

Five months after the initial workshop on January 16th, 2015, the teams made a formal presentation of their project to a ten-person jury. The jury was composed of professionals from Turkish universities, NGOs, media, celebrities, TV personalities, local municipalities, and opinion leaders. Each team had four minutes to present in a format of their choice. The jury had two minutes to ask questions and evaluate the teams based on a set of pre-determined questions. Most of teams presenting created visual presentations; combining video and PowerPoint. The projects were evaluated on a 1 to 5-scale with 1 being 'poor' and 5 being 'excellent.' The team projects were assessed based on the following questions. The first two questions were asked to the teams during their presentation. In addition, the jury evaluated the remaining six questions (#3 through #8):

1. Please present any details from failures to successes that would help us better understand the story of your project and the experiences of those involved.

2. Please tell us what you have put in place to make their project continue.

3. Has the team been creative in their presentation and complemented it with visuals?

4. Students clearly defined an environmental or sustainability problem on their campus.

5. The project, however simple, affects a significant change in either the habits of students and administrators or the way in which the campus functions as a whole.

6. Students smartly and effectively used social media across as many platforms as a tool for outreach and social marketing.

7. Students were creative in how they educated others about their project.

8. Students offered offline gatherings, hosted community events or created bulletin mailings to inform others about their projects

After the competition was complete, the winning teams were announced. The Jury selected two winning teams from the ten that presented. The team from Bogazici University, the BounToGreen team's goal was one of the two that won, their project was to safely recycle electronic waste and in the process the team found a way to save water on their campus. The team signed an agreement with a company to provide e-waste boxes on campus for the exchange

of the e-waste material in the boxes. The team had "Acquaintances Meetings" to inform students, faculty and staff about their project and to get feedback on their project. The team reached out to local businesses and they too are participating in their recycling e-waste project.

The second winning team was from Ozyegin University. "OzU Mobility" team's goal was to increase sustainable accessibility to their university by adding an express route from two major bus stations to their campus thus decreasing their carbon footprint. This team learned in the beginning that they needed to work with other groups (student union, campus leaders and commercial organizations) to make their project work. The team developed and implemented a student questionnaire about carpooling and they developed carpooling suppliers and users guidelines. The team worked managed to arrange four express busses from the University to Altunizade. The team is actively working with Istanbul Transportation Manager for arranging IETT buses. The team developed its own carpooling app and is supporting Volt's carpooling activity.

These two teams (BounToGreen and OzU Mobility) will travel to the U.S. during the summer 2015 to attend a sustainability workshop and to reunite with the U.S students who attended the workshop in Turkey.

In addition to the two teams selected, all the other participating teams actively engaged their peers in their projects through social media and online tools. In aggregate, all the student projects reached approximately 9,500 students across five universities. Since students were required to build their own communities and to develop and grow their projects, the results also showed the importance and effect of social impact. All participating teams employed projects that led to behavior changes on campus towards making environmentally sound decisions such as recycling, car pooling, using public transportation, minimizing food waste, etc.

Lessons Learned

The students were given many tools in the workshop to initiate their projects including lessons on project management. Their learning continued during the development and implementation phases of their projects. Many of the students mentioned that they realized patience was needed to accomplish their goals. In addition, students learned how to solve problems and issues through learning some negotiation skills.

Other lessons learned were:

- Students learned that best way to actively engaged fellow students was through social media with online and offline campaigns.
- Teams that received support from school management and academia were more confident to achieve their goals and had a better outreach.
- Some teams worked with outside companies and organizations, which assisted in their efforts to advance the team's sustainable projects; in most cases this made their projects stronger.
- Students learned to raise funds for their projects with few resources, and were very creative in how they found solutions to problems. They successfully engaged volunteers, media, academicians and school staff in their projects to reach their goals.

- Most teams had a hard time trying to simplify their problem. In the workshop, it was good practice for them to identify a simple problem and find a way to solve it.
- It was challenging for some team members to get along and some teams couldn't follow through because of lack of partnership, cooperation, and teamwork.
- Most all of participating projects were very successful. However, the projects have been in progress for five months.
- What made the difference for jury selection for the winning teams was the ability of the teams to present very quantifiable and easy to follow data.

A Student's Perspective

This is the perspective of one of the U.S. students who participated in the workshop teaming with the Wall-efy's from Özyeğin University. Working with students from another country on a global issue such as sustainability was an enlightening, empowering, and absolutely incredible experience. This intensive workshop taught me several key points. Ethnic, cultural, and language differences do not hinder work – rather it enriches it and adds a more colorful dynamic to the job at hand. The solution to the major problems we face in the world is finding a balance between the planet, people, and profit. My generation is the one that needs to continue to find that balance. Lastly, people from all experiences and background can make a positive impact on finding solutions; everyone has something valuable to contribute.

After two days of learning about Turkey's (particularly Istanbul's) rich culture and history, it was time to meet the Turkish students we would be working with at the workshop. Everyone was incredibly nice and hospitable. During the day at the workshop we learned more about the topics we were studying. I was in the consumption group. In the evening, we would work on our project that would be implemented on the Turkish students' campus. And into the early morning we played games like 'capture the flag' and 'psychiatrist.' The students bonded very quickly, which enhanced our work. The U.S students learned about the Turkish culture and language and the Turkish students learned about the U.S. culture and language. This all laid the foundation for some great projects that each team implemented this year.

During the consumption workshop, we learned about each of the three P's of sustainability – planet, people, and profit – as it related to our topic. We also heard many talks on social entrepreneurship through the frame of a green lens. Lastly, project management was heavily discussed in all the workshops. After three intense days, our team left prepared to start implementing the ideas we came up with during the workshop. Those days in the workshop were intense and eye opening for two reasons. First, I was working with three Turkish students on track to go to law school and I am an engineering student. Second, there was a small language barrier that we had to work through. But it was fun working past those challenges to come up with a good project.

My team worked on the previously mentioned "Wall-efy" project. Originally, our team wanted to implement the three P's of sustainability in some innovative way. We wanted to develop a receptacle for recyclables that was fun and interactive. This was all inspired by Volkswagen's "fun theory." The theory that if you can make a boring idea fun (e.g., like throwing away garbage or using the stairs instead of the escalator). If the task were not boring then people would be more likely to do it. My teammates over in Turkey refined that idea into their "Wall-efy"

project! It was a great experience to be a part of this team. I am very thankful for my new friends and the incredible experience I had in Turkey.

Conclusion

The Go Green Student Project shows evidence that when equipped with knowledge and incentives, students are compelled to take action and deliver results that have both social and environmental impacts and thus, make change happen. While the Go Green Student Project is not complete, it is off to a great start. Many Go Green Student Project goals will be determined in the future based on the results of the students' projects. The two winning teams will visit the U.S. in the summer of 2015 for a sustainability workshop and will meet with the U.S. students who participated in the original workshop in Turkey.

Of the participating teams, each group actively engaged online and social media tools reaching out to 9,500 students across five participating universities, as well as, successfully building their communities offline. It is important to note that the participating teams launched projects with almost no help from university management, but they did have the support of their university administration. Furthermore, the social impact of the projects can easily be measured from the visible changes that have occurred on the participating university campuses.

The Public Affairs Section of the Consulate General of U.S. in Istanbul, Turkey funded the grant for the Go Green Student Project. This Section of the Consulate promotes projects that collaborate on topics of interest or importance for both countries (U.S. and Turkey). [12] The Public Affairs Section works closely with NGOs such as Yesilist to provide programs such as this one, which allowed Turkish students to meet with their American counterparts in this case to create awareness of sustainable issues globally. The authors of this paper are grateful to the U.S. Consulate in Turkey for funding this project.

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