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Facilitating Development of an International Sister Cities Relationship: The Role of Academia

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Abstract

Preceded by a successful 15-year academic relationship, in 2013, Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia USA and the city of Montepulciano in Tuscany Italy signed a 25-year partnership agreement setting out a detailed collaborative agreement highlighted by the first-floor leasing of the city's Fortezza. This contract included a complete renovation with access to state-of-the-art learning facilities. This began the real process of cultivating a sister city relationship leveraging this joint management project, public administration and a governance relationship.

Each year since its inception in 1998, Kennesaw State University has collaborated with Montepulciano to provide international study abroad opportunities. Approximately 200 students travel annually to Montepulciano representing up to 10 academic colleges within the university. Over time, the university's growing relationship with Montepulciano stakeholders served as the genesis of expansion to a city-to-city formalized relationship leveraging the public administration and governance structures. Following the Covid-19 pandemic, individuals from the university and Montepulciano city officials began conceiving the possibility of formalizing a relationship with the city of Kennesaw, the university's location. In the past two years, Coles College of Business students met with the city, cultural and education leaders studying and analyzing how the two entities could collaborate. They conducted in-depth interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders and ultimately initiated consulting relationships with Montepulciano companies and organizations. For example, Kennesaw State University nursing students partnered with Montepulciano hospital nursing students to study and share best practices. In turn, a team of nurses and hospital administrators from Montepulciano visited Kennesaw State nursing students, professors, and the local WellStar hospital.

The formalized sister city agreement is scheduled to be signed on 7 October 2025. This process of creating the relationship between the cities of Kennesaw and Montepulciano encompassed management from public administration and governance.

Keywords: public administration; leadership; cultural; educational; engagement