

It is a great honor for all of us at the Ionian University to preside over the official opening of the university's office in the United States. As the Chairman of the board of the Ionian University's Center for Research and Innovation, I am especially honored to be with you today. Despite the difficulties for a small and regional university in Greece, the Ionian University's research activity has grown substantially in the recent years.

In fact, the university's departments offer cutting-edge academic programs in a vast array of scientific fields. The effective collaboration of the departments on both the educational and research areas is, without a doubt, one of the most vital aspects of the Ionian University. At the same time, high-level research is being conducted at the 39 research labs of the Ionian University, and this can be demonstrated both in the international partnerships that the university has formed up until this point and in the broader advancements that it has implemented in a number of different scientific fields.

The holistic participation of our research labs at the University Center for Research and Innovation, and their strong willingness for scientific collaboration has produced 7 multidisciplinary Institutes which have promoted significantly the dissemination of the research results of our University.

In this very context, the establishment of the first office of a Greek academic institution in the United States will contribute to the development of new collaborative initiatives with American academic institutions, both on education and research, thereby establishing a framework of trust and security. The establishment of an official office of the Ionian University will also serve to fortify existing partnerships, speed up administrative procedures, and facilitate more straightforward and simple communication.

At this point, allow me to focus on the ongoing partnerships that have already been established and demonstrate the dynamics of the Ionian University.

Since 2019, we have been working hard to build a strong research collaboration with institutions in the United States. In particular, our collaborations with Johns Hopkins, George Mason University and McGovern Texas, were highlighted at the Pharos Summit recently in the context of the visit of US university groups to Greece. All these mature collaborations have brought benefits to all participating institutions, confirming the fact that both Greece as a country and the Ionian University, already have the scientific staff, the will, and the know-how to significantly contribute at challenging international collaborations.

There is no doubt that the advancement of scientific research, academic extroversion, and the linkage of research with a worldwide market are all encouraged by such partnerships. The Ionian University has demonstrated that it not only possesses the required elements of excellence, but also possesses the capacity to interact with reputable universities from other countries. In this context, the establishment of an office in New York creates an academic hub that will contribute to the improvement of current collaborations as well as the scientific and educational training of the undergraduates. The community of the Ionian University and all Greek researchers will gain numerous benefits from this internationalization.

A few decades ago, hundreds of Greeks immigrated to the United States in with the goal to find better opportunities, and they succeeded. Today, a Greek academic institution will inaugurate a core of international cooperation, thereby strengthening research-level ties between Greece and the United States and fostering direct and ongoing communication with the **Diaspora.**

Therefore, I hope with all of my heart, and I think I express the wish of all of my colleagues at the Ionian University, that this office will be the connecting link for the development of new innovative partnerships, demonstrating how a university like the Ionian can overcome the existing difficulties and star in the international research arena.