



## **Economics expert arrives at IUK School of Business**

By DEREK R. SMITH

Tribune business writer

Sunday, September 25, 2005

Fjorentina Angjellari-Dajci, an assistant professor of economics at Indiana University Kokomo, had trouble coming to the United States.

The Tirana, Albania, native failed to obtain a student visa at an American consulate in Macedonia despite her academic credentials as an economics undergraduate student at the University of Tirana.

Angjellari-Dajci said she became emotional in 1999 when she finally got her visa in Ankara, Turkey, to study in a graduate nonprofit management program in Worcester, Mass.

"I felt like God was being very good to me and I felt like I had to give him back what he gave me," she said.

### **Albania to America**

Albania is on the Adriatic Sea, north of Greece. Its capital city, Tirana, has about 1 million of the nation's 3.5 million residents.

"Albania is one of the poorest -- if not the poorest -- countries of Europe," she said. "There have been huge demographic changes [since the fall of communism]. People have moved from other regions into the capital."

Angjellari-Dajci said it was difficult leaving behind her family, but she felt dissatisfied with educational opportunities in Albania.

"I felt like my training was purely theoretical and I wanted to do research," she said. "We hardly did any research in Albania."

After a few months living with her aunt in Worcester, it became apparent to Angjellari-Dajci that she wanted to study elsewhere.

### **From Little Apple to Big Apple**

She ended up earning her master's and doctoral degrees in economics in Manhattan, Kan., at Kansas State University.

"I went through the program very fast because I was very motivated," she said. "Everything you work hard for, you appreciate better."

Angjellari-Dajci said she met her husband, an Albanian native named Dardian, last year in New York and "fell in love right away."

In December 2004, the couple moved to New York, where Angjellari-Dajci taught microeconomics, finance, accounting and business management at the Globe Institute of Technology while completing her doctoral dissertation.

### **Coming to Kokomo**

Angjellari-Dajci met IUK professor Kathy Parkison at an economics conference in Philadelphia.

"She was a bit different from the other interviewers," said Angjellari-Dajci. "She really wanted to know who I was."

Angjellari-Dajci said she applied for teaching positions at about 60 universities, but IUK made her the best offer.

Niranjan Pati, dean of IUK's business school, said his department received about 240 resumes for Angjellari-Dajci's position, adding Angjellari-Dajci became the "candidate of choice" during IUK's interview process.

"The faculty got excited about Fjorentina," Pati said.

Angjellari-Dajci's background allows her to "expose our students to different facets of the global economy," Pati said.

### **Communism to capitalism**

Angjellari-Dajci's dissertation deals with the relationship between government in countries like Albania and institutions like the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and European Bank.

She argues such institutions must work with local and national government officials -- not disregard them -- to end corruption, reduce unemployment and promote growth through economic development and outside investment.

Infrastructure improvements such as a highway to connect Albania with surrounding countries are important, not only for Albania, but for the region, Angjellari-Dajci said.

After the fall of communism, some Albanians constructed illegal buildings along the Lana River, which led to environmental problems, she said.

"There is a role for government and we all know that," she said. "There was a need for government intervention in the enforcement of property rights and contracts."

### **Instability, brain drain**

Albania has seen political instability in recent years, she said.

"One major problem I see is that you don't really have new [younger] politicians," she said. "There is a vicious circle of politics that perpetuates corruption and threats."

Angjellari-Dajci said many Albanian families paid much of their savings into a financial pyramid scheme in which seven to 10 fictitious companies scammed Albanians through promises of financial gain.

"The government did little to inform the people that this is not how capitalism works," she said.

In 1997, a civil war broke out in which Angjellari-Dajci said violence was linked to political affiliation.

"It was like there was no state," she said. "There was no government."

Angjellari-Dajci became involved with Tirana's Women in Development Association, which examines the role women play in Albanian politics and the nation as a whole.

"Women play a major role in Albania," she said. "It's an important women's movement that is taking place."

Albania has seen significant "brain drain" as young intellectuals have moved elsewhere, Angjellari-Dajci said.

Although most Albanians have strong ties to their families, "people tell you you're stupid if you come back," she said.

But she said people like her brother have decided to stay in Albania even though it can be difficult to get a job.

Although the fall of communism has brought hope to Albanians, Angjellari-Dajci said the country's future remains uncertain.

"I cannot be sure about anything," she said. "Nobody can."

Derek Smith may be reached at (765) 454-8580 or via e-mail at [derek.smith@kokomotribune.com](mailto:derek.smith@kokomotribune.com).

**©2005 The Kokomo Tribune. [Privacy Policy](#)  
300 N. Union - Kokomo, IN 46904  
765/459-3121 - 800/382-0696**