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By Etuna Tsotniashvili

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A few months ago British Petroleum (BP), on behalf of its oil and gas project co-venturers, initiated and funded the establishment of the Project Management College (PMC), in partnership with the Free University. An award ceremony was held at Free University on June 17 for the first graduates of the new college.

Neil Dunn, BP Georgia's General Manager, welcomed the students and invited guests and highlighted that successful project management is a guarantee of success in Georgia.

"When we started out this was just an idea, and here we are at the first certificate ceremony, and it's very exciting. I guess we have some future students enrolled in the fourth track here, and I wish you the best, as I know you're eager to start your challenge as well, and that's really good ... this process, from planning projects to scheduling them and bringing them in on time and within budget, is something we've relied upon and has been a key to the BTC pipeline right from the start. When I look at everybody here and think about the opportunities both in the public and private sectors of Georgia I realize that this is going to be a big factor of success for many firms within Georgia both in the public and private sectors. I know you'll be hearing many testimonies about project execution here in Georgia in the future and it's going to be the people in this room who are actually going to lead those projects. I want to congratulate you on that," Dunn said, adding that he is very glad that the students are taking their lessons so seriously.

Simon Kadagidze, Rector of the Free University, thanked BP for organizing such a project, adding that Free University's aim is to support the professional development of people keen to acquire knowledge. "We are proud to partner with BP in building up a strong cohort of Georgian project managers and thus contribute to the development of the country's private and public sectors," Kadagidze said.

Lela Machaidze is one of the students at the college. She works for the Technology Management Company and read about the college on the Internet. She says that this initial course was very productive for her as it introduced her to a new style of European and US project management. "I've gained very great experience and skill which will help me in my future career, thanks to BP," Lela told *The Messenger*.

The Project Management Programme consists of seven modules and leads to two globally recognised qualifications, the Masters Certificate in Project Management awarded by George Washington University (GWU) and the PM Professional certificate awarded by the Project Management Institute (PMI).

The aim of the project is also to increase the capacity of local training institutions, and in 2-3 years time local professionals will be trained by ESI International to deliver future classes in the Georgian language.

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