**Visiting Advisors Report**

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia
January 27-31, 1999
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## *Introduction*

The visiting advisors thank the rectorate, faculty and students of J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek (hereafter, SUO) for their cooperation and hospitality in the consultations held in January, 1999. Special thanks are owed to the chief organizers of the visit: Dr. Gordana Kralik, Rector and Professor; Dr. Marijan Seruga, Vice Rector and Associate Professor; Dr. Drazenka Jurkovic, Vice Rector and Professor; and Ms.Lidija Getto, Head of the Office of International Relations. Approximately 25 other faculty members participated in some part or all of the consultations. Nine students from the faculties of food technology, civil engineering, electrical engineering, and education actively participated throughout the meeting.

A spirit and practice of peer consultation, rather than external evaluation, was readily adopted by SUO participants and advisors alike.

## *Agenda, Process and Schedule*

The visiting team was invited to SUO to advise primarily in two domains: (1) student needs and the role of students in institutional affairs, including international student exchange; and (2) technology in higher education, including applications in education, research, management, administration, and through internet. In the course of discussing "student needs," as well articulated by the student participants themselves, discussions broadened to include such subjects as curriculum, faculty roles, exams, and curricular and educational responses to changing societal needs and employment markets for SUO graduates.

Although the advisors would have welcomed more advance information and analysis of chosen topics from the University itself, the consultations may have served well to better define the issues related to which SUO desires specific institutional learning and change. It is hoped that the deliberations were useful in themselves and that they have pointed the way to some helpful and affordable follow-up measures by the University.

SUO organized the three days of consultations within two workshops which met concurrently and then for a final session together before the team reported to Rector Kralik and her colleagues. After the opening joint session, Workshop A, chaired by Vice Rector Jurkovic, held nearly eight hours of discussions on student needs, standards, and university credit systems. Head of International Relations Lidija Getto, a core of 4-6 faculty members(and eight more part-time participants), seven student representatives, and advisors

Fried and Short participated in that workshop over the two-day period. Workshop B, chaired by Vice Rector Seruga, on the application of information and other technologies to education and research, met with 18 faculty members and a couple of students. Advisor Lawrence Keyes represented the team in those discussions.

The workshop format was conducive to an open exchange of information and analysis, and the SUO participants are to be commended for their readiness to participate in a form of problem-solving deliberation which unintentionally implies more criticism than credit to the University's current programs and practice. The team felt that this orientation to self-improvement boded well for the idea of SUO--to use the now popular management phrases--as a "*learning organization*" striving to become a "*learning community.*" The workshops attracted a critical mass of discussants from different faculties and their respective student bodies. These were supplemented by individual contacts between advisors and SUO participants between sessions, especially at mealtimes.

### *Strossmayer University & Higher Education in Croatia*

Strossmayer University is a worthy participant in the Universities Project and the Visiting Advisors Program. It is seeking self-improvement, and as shown in its having an Office of International Relations, it also is reaching out for collaborations within Europe and globally. Its contacts through the Salzburg Seminar already serve to reduce the isolation which it feels, significantly as a result of Croatia's continuing diplomatic isolation within Europe. Its interest in student and faculty exchange with other countries further underlines its priority on having more global ties. It continues to cultivate partnerships with some thirteen institutions of higher education in Europe, including its first, in 1975, the University of Gdansk in Poland.

A few facts about SUO and Croation higher education help place this visit within the unfolding Visiting Advisors Program. SUO, in the city of Osijek, located in Eastern Slavonia, is one of four national universities, also including Zagreb, Split and Rijeka. Recently, it has had 9,272 registered students: 5,304 full-timers financially supported by the Ministry of Science and Technology; 786 full-timers who pay their own way; and 1,572 self-financing part-timers. There are nine faculties(agriculture, food technology, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, electrical engineering, economics, law, education and medicine). Law and economics faculties register the most students, though the agricultural, food technology and engineering faculties are traditional and influential faculties at the institution. Four faculties conduct postgraduate programs.

SUO has its rectorate headquarters and several faculty buildings in Tvrda(Fortress), an historical section of Osijek, where the university plans to expand its presence over the years to come. Other faculties like law, education, and electrical engineering are dispersed throughout the city. Mechanical engineering is offered in the nearby town of Slavonski Brod.

Most students commute to SUO, and residential accommodations are provided for only 285 students. Dining facilities are available at University student centers in Osijek and Slavonski Brod. Two science buildings, with costly equipment, were destroyed during

Croatia's war of independence from Yugoslavia (1991-92) These are being replaced now, under a Ministry capital allocation initially amounting to 13 million DM.

SUO has 441 academic staff, including 179 full professors, 78 teaching staff, and 184 teaching assistants and associates. Among these, 208 hold PhDs, and 115 the Master's degree. Salaries are very modest, given the severe financial constraints on government funding.

The national Higher Education Law sets the terms for University governance. There is a Board of Governors (6-12 persons, including university and Ministry nominees); the University Senate which notably includes students; and the rector who must vie for authority in a system which rests strongly on the prerogatives of the respective faculties—significantly, faculties are budgeted directly, not through the Rector, and information technologies are budgeted directly with the faculties, relatively independent of the rectorate.

In 1993, the National Council for Higher Education was established to advise the Ministry of Science and Technology on national issues and, according to SUO delegate to the Council, Professor Marija Ivezic, to develop proposals to the Council and Sabor (national parliament) for a "new network of higher education institutions." Of special interest to the advisors, the National Council is to help create a system of "quality assessment and assurance" for higher education in Croatia. To this end, faculties in the four national universities are expected to engage in regular and systematic self-evaluation, the first cycle of which is to be completed by June, 1999. University faculties and programs will also be assessed by visiting "expert commissions."

The advisors, in response to Prof. Ivezic's presentation about the National Council and its concern for quality assurance and self-improvement measures, shared information about the U.S. system of non-governmental regional accrediting associations and their practices and standards for peer review and quality assessment for higher education institutions. The New England Association of Schools & Colleges(NEASC), with its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education(CIHE), was cited, and a copy of its publication, *Standards for Accreditation*(1992), was given to the rectorate as a potentially useful reference for its own self-evaluation and improvement measures. Copies of the *Standard 6-Student Services* portion of that volume were distributed to all participants in Workshop A, and suggested as an outline of the issues and standards which SUO may wish to address as it evolves its own concepts and practices for addressing students needs, standards, and roles within the University.

### *Factors Affecting Student and Technology Needs*

The advisors observed that several factors, within SUO's circumstances, significantly affect how it may address student and technology needs. Among these, and this is by no means an exhaustive list, are the following. These factors suggest some of SUO's opportunities and constraints in relation to the observations which follow:

**E*conomic/Financial***. SUO and its members, as well as Eastern Slovonia and Croatia, are facing greater than usual economic and financial difficulties. The national and regional economies are depressed, and since independence the country and University locale are still in search of economic regeneration. There is an unemployment rate of at least 30 percent within the Osijek area served by the University. During Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia, and the ensuing war, the city of Osijek was bombarded for over eight months in 1991-92, with much damage to life, industries and infrastructure which has still to be overcome. The University, for example, lost two of its best-equipped buildings. The loss of industries in Osijek has further constrained the University's opportunities to place its students in internships and its graduates in employment.

SUO and the other three national universities are funded by the national government. There are many claims upon the national budget, so SUO is hard-pressed to secure adequate funding for academic staff salaries(faculty members are typically paid less than US$300 monthly), student support and services(including for 5,300 full-timers), facilities maintenance and development/reconstruction, and computer and other technologies(especially for the University's technology-intensive faculties of engineering, agriculture and food technology).

***International Relations***. Since gaining recognition in January 1992, Croatia still has not secured the full diplomatic, trade, institutional and other ties within Europe and the world which it would like. Related, some of SUO's past international academic ties were interrupted or attenuated during the war of separation from Yugoslavia; its search for expansion of global ties has been constrained, in part, by Croatia's still uncertain national standing in relation to the world and notably to western and international organizations. For example, Croatian universities are still not eligible to take part in the European Union's TEMPUS Program which supports the exchange of students and faculty between the new democracies of East Central Europe and the member states of the EU. By a variety of measures, including its relationship with the Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar and its participation in the CEEPUS Program(Central European Program for University Studies) of the Austrian government, SUO is seeking to overcome its own relative isolation and to secure new ideas and resources through international contact.

***University Traditions and Reform***. As in other countries of the world, SUO is seeking to redefine the balance to be struck between tradition and change, as it considers the societal and student needs of this time. As for many universities world-wide, one question for SUO is whether and to what extent it will remain faculty and research-centered(the "tradition" of many European and U.S. universities) or change and "reform" to become more student and learning-centered.

## *Towards a Learning Community*

SUO's choice of "student needs" as the focus for this consultation suggests its openness to a paradigm of education which is gaining considerable support in the United States and Western Europe. This approach, suggested by the concept of "*learning community*," starts with the needs of students (as well as society and economy), not with those of faculties and disciplines; stresses facilitated and joint learning rather than unilateral transfer of information

by faculty to students; engages professors as facilitators, motivators, and mentors rather than as mere purveyors of knowledge; conceives of learning as a shared, interactive process among all within the university; and challenges students to take responsibility for their own learning, understood as *life-long* learning so necessary to serving in continually and dynamically changing economies, societies, and professions. To become a "*learning community*," of course, the University must be a "*learning organization*," striving in various ways to adapt itself to foster a community of learning.

Within the consultation, in its oral report to the rectorate, and now in this final report, the visiting team has wished to make explicit the learning community framework for its observations. Its observations, growing initially from student, faculty and rectorate views of "student needs," may be grouped among four headings: curriculum, faculty, guidance, and services.

## *Team Observations*

### Curriculum

Universities throughout the world are re-examining and in many cases "reforming" their curricula, to serve evolving student and societal needs, and to respond to internal and external pressures. The advisors got glimpses of the pressures for and expectations of curricular reform which appear to be growing at SUA. As at many universities and colleges in the United States, some SUO schools are experiencing high rates of attrition (loss of students) as each new class (cohort) of students moves through the University. According to a faculty participant, 77 percent of full-time students registered in the faculty of agriculture in winter 1994 had left the faculty by winter semester 1998 (only 63 of 276 remained). Undoubtedly, there are many non-curricular reasons for this student attrition, but the adequacy and relevance of curriculum certainly seem to be at issue. Parenthetically, the advisors applaud this self-assessment by the faculty of agriculture as an example of the kind of institutional research which can inform curricular and institutional change.

When asked why economics and law are the most highly enrolled faculties, one student answered, in part, that they are "easier," in the sense of being more flexible and less tightly structured so that, for example, a student may be able to work part-time to pay for his or her studies. This and other comments gave the impression of faculty and student concern about the structure and content of University curricula. The *Course Guide for the Faculty of Electrical Engineering*, for example, indicates that a student's curriculum in that field is very closely prescribed with heavy loads of math and technical subjects in each of eight semesters. Most "electives" are within the faculty of electric engineering, and there are only two "university elective courses" which permit study in other faculties such as economics or law. There is little opportunity for the student to explore world history and literature, economics, international relations, or the social sciences, and there is no expectation that the student will engage in general learning, across all the faculties, as the foundation of university education.

*Reforming the curriculum*. Students and faculty alike expressed concern about whether University curricula are suited to meet current student and societal needs, and whether or not they can be adapted readily enough to meet changing needs. For the Advisors, this raised three kinds of questions:

- whether or not the University is able to assess and interpret the economic and social needs of Croatia and Eastern Slavonia in order to prepare its students to serve, to be productive and creative, and to make a living; for example, by consulting external sources such as agricultural groups, government, industries, social service agencies, and "international markets," can SUO better determine its educational priorities for students?

- whether or not it can adapt its curricula and educational modes effectively and quickly enough to seize the opportunities and avoid the pitfalls of rapid change; that is, armed with a better sense of what its educational priorities are to be, for example in relation to the agricultural economy, can SUO actually change curricula, cross traditional faculty boundaries, or initiate experiential opportunities for students which may be necessary for it to enter "new markets" for both its students and graduates?

- whether or not it can adopt additional measures for helping students to make the best of their University education; that is, are SUO faculties prepared to adopt such innovations as experiential, internship and career counseling programs which enable students to better understand and make connections between theory and practice, the University and the workplace, and between higher learning and their working and personal lives?

What these questions suggest for the University is illustrated by three examples cited in the consultations. Several SUO faculties have been preparing students for jobs in regional industries which because of general economic factors or the destruction of the war are hiring many fewer of their graduates. Suppose the University decided to develop an entrepreneurship program to prepare students to initiate and run their own enterprises(As one student said, "I'd need to learn how to secure capital and cope with risk."). To develop such a program would surely require the cooperation of several faculties, for example, economics, law and electrical engineering, if entrepreneurship education in information technology were contemplated. That, in turn, would require inter-faculty cooperation and a new interdisciplinary curriculum. Similarly, experiential components such as student internships and study abroad, as well as faculty exchanges, could expose students to entrepreneurial attitudes, ideas and modes still not common within the University or perhaps Croatia.

Another possibility is that SUO would develop a program and special curriculum to address the needs of the elderly in Croatia (gerontology). Pressing social needs could be addressed while new career and service opportunities are opened for SUO students. Again, inter-faculty cooperation and an interdisciplinary curriculum would surely be required, for example, among the medical, education, economics and law faculties. This program could certainly make good educational use of internships and voluntary service to prepare students to work with the elderly.

The third example of a potential inter-faculty program was noted by SUO: agricultural economics. This might seize the opportunities to combine resources from two of the University's existing and most important faculties to address the needs of Eastern Slavonia as the main agricultural region of the country. Such an interdisciplinary combination has been common in state universities of the United States for many years.

The above are examples of a way of thinking about how to reform the curriculum to meet changing student and societal needs, and the particular interdisciplinary programs cited are not necessarily recommended. Pragmatically, new and relevant programs of study may be necessary for the University and particular faculties to attract and keep students.

*Restructuring the curriculum*. Reforming curriculum is closely related to restructuring it. The SUO rectorate is rightly concerned that the University needs a course credit system which will encourage curricular innovation and interdisciplinary study. Apparently, the current system impedes the development of new curricular designs, interdisciplinary study, and inter-faculty cooperation. There also may be legal impediments and a certain unwillingness on the part of individual faculties to "give up" part of their "sovereignty" which prevents the SUO rectorate from taking more decisive steps toward restructuring. But, ultimately, these steps will need to be taken if the University wants to live up to the challenges which it is facing.

Although the common course credit system in the United States has its own faults, the advisors suggest that that be examined for possible applications at SUO and in Croatia. The U.S. system, at least, is flexible enough to encourage constant experimentation, new curricular designs and course combinations, and continual adaptations to perceived student and societal needs (and "markets"). Examination of course catalogs from several state land-grant universities, with programs of study comparable to SUO's, could be useful. Those typically are explicit about the course credit system, and about "credit requirements" which define the nature of "university education" at different institutions.

Closely related to curricular reform and restructuring is the issue of examination requirements and proof of learning success. Here, the advisors met with a remarkable sense of anxiety expressed by the students present in the meetings. They reported that they and their fellow students fear and lament the University's course exam practice. Typically, as the Advisors understand it, a single exam(usually oral) is given at the end of each course. Everything rides on that, and given the inflexibility of course credit, course sequence, and exam systems, one exam failure, in certain circumstances, can necessitate that a student repeat an entire year of study. This, by itself, may be contributing significantly to students dropping out of the University. Surely, the development of a true learning community can be impeded when exam practice threatens love of learning and strikes fear among the best of students.

Exam systems and practice are problematical and debated world-wide. Still, promising new perspectives and practices are being developed which place exams in a broader framework of assessment to support learning. For example, in the "portfolio" method, a student will explain and demonstrate intellectual progress to faculty by exhibiting benchmarks of achievement/improvement in numerous exams over time, lab projects, applications of

knowledge in voluntary service and internships in communities outside the University, arts performances, or the like. Similarly, there are ways by which SUO could adapt its current exam practices to improve the educational process for its students, to reduce their anxieties about exams and, the advisors strongly suspect, *their alienation from the educational experience*: written as well as oral exams; valuing several exams rather than only one final exam; using methods besides exams to assess student achievement.

Several themes and recommendations, implied by the issues above, emerged from the consultations about curriculum. Each of these flowed more or less from initial observations by students and/or faculty members.

- Continual assessment and appropriate adaptations of curriculum content and structure will better respond to student and societal needs. The SUO faculties are currently engaged in self-evaluation of their programs as part of a national process initiated for all Croatian universities by the National Council for Higher Education. This exercise might be used by SUO to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the next 5-10 year period, with the goals of defining more clearly what might be the competitive edge of SUO in relation to the other three Croatian universities, and of eliminating duplications of effort among the universities.

- To better understand societal needs and to prepare students for ongoing and newly emerging employment and career markets, as well as voluntary service, SUO may well expand its ties to external communities, employment markets and employers, university associations, governmental agencies, and as through the Salzburg Seminar/Universities Project, with universities world-wide. Such ties may be in the form of institutional research about external conditions and markets, consultations with others, seeking international technical assistance on carefully defined problems(for example, curriculum, course credit, or exam issues and practice), or student internships and student/faculty service projects in surrounding communities and agencies. Wherever possible, students should be involved in the planning and carrying out of these kinds of activities, for example, in the form of guided research projects.

- Diversification of the curriculum is highly recommended as a way to respond to changing student and societal needs, and also *demands*, as from employment markets, student prospect markets(that is, the students who may be attracted to enroll at SUO and continue until graduation) , or from the emerging civil society(where, for example, health and elder care must be provided). Curricula which respond to new societal needs and markets will need to be innovative, interdisciplinary, and surely will require inter-faculty and University-wide cooperation.

- Several issues need to be addressed in greater depth and with more focused technical expertise and/or time than this consultation permitted. Curriculum reform, the course credit system, the role and use of examinations, and information technology applications are among the issues which lend themselves to focused

attention and action. Progress on any of these issues would have high and positive impacts within faculties and throughout the University, notably for the benefit of students and their attitudes about the educational experience at SUO. The Advisors suggest that the University further investigate these issues and perhaps, in time, develop a project proposal for national or international funders in order to secure additional resources and expertise to support SUO initiatives for curricular reform and restructuring.

**Faculty**

According to the concept of *learning community*, faculty roles change from dispensing knowledge and wisdom to helping students to become independent learners, from being wholly concerned with faculty research to being equally concerned to engage students in joint research or their own independent research.

Students at SUO, like their counterparts throughout the world, hunger for closer intellectual and personal engagement with faculty members. The Advisors suspect that the University's choice of "student needs" as one focus for discussions, and the faculty's presence and interest in this topic, encouraged participating students to believe in the possibility of a true community of learning. Faculty members, through small and large measures, could further encourage students in this direction by visibly and systematically addressing specific issues of student concern in curriculum reform, student guidance, or student services, as cited throughout this report. Given the considerable authority of individual professors and their faculties, the limited authority of the rectorate (for example, compared to greater presidential authority in the U.S.), and the absence of professional "student affairs" staff at SUO, it will be the faculty who will decide to what extent student needs and perspectives are heard. And each faculty member needs to understand that commitment to students' concerns is a core value of the SUO mission which cannot be neglected. To continue regular faculty consultations with student leaders, such as seemed so productive in this advisory process, would be a simple, inexpensive and potentially valuable follow-up measure.

Another faculty approach to extending the learning community would be for the faculties, with the rectorate and student leaders, to jointly address one or more of the most strongly felt concerns articulated by the students. The exam system, which seems to impede rather than to encourage learning, would be one choice. Academic and career advising is another.

As was evident in the workshop on information technology, many SOU faculty are enthusiastic and exceedingly knowledgeable about technology applications to education, research and administrative purposes. If students' educational needs get priority, then applications for classroom, research and other modes of teaching and learning will get corresponding attention and emphasis. The impression of the advisors is that the students, faculties and University will be well served if the faculties and rectorate engage in joint strategic planning of future technology acquisition and use. This is especially so, if student learning is to be made a high priority, and related, if faculty professional development is to be oriented to helping students to become competent in applying computer-based technologies in their respective fields, be that history, chemistry, or electrical engineering.

Planning and budgeting for costly information technology at SUO is based in individual faculties, while at the same time there are many arguments for University-wide cooperation, coordination and planning of this domain. Certainly, international funding sources and perhaps Croatian government sources are more likely to respond to University proposals which demonstrate the most purposeful, best coordinated, and most efficient use of technological resources for the entire University.

Several suggestions grow from these observations:

- SUO faculties may wish to explore changing faculty roles, associated with a commitment to create a learning community. SOU faculty development seminars and faculty exchanges, notably with U.S. universities, are ways to do this.

- Faculties and rectorate might usefully continue regular consultations with student leaders about how they perceive needs and concerns.

- It may be useful to create a university task force, including faculty members, vice rectors and students, to recommend ways to reform examination practices in order to improve learning. Learning assessment theories and practices in other countries also may be worth considering.

- Another University task force might be formed to develop a University-wide strategic plan for the acquisition and use of information technology, including a priority on its applications to teaching and learning.

**Student Guidance**

Academic, career, and personal guidance for students, taking such forms as individual counseling and advising, or group orientation and advising, is a critically important component of the learning community, and pragmatically, for addressing pressing issues like high student drop-out rates, lack of direction and poor performance in courses and degree programs, and obstacles to entering careers and getting jobs upon graduation. Several comments by students and faculty members suggest that greater University attention to student guidance could have very positive results.

Historically, faculties throughout the world have been reluctant to take roles and responsibilities for student guidance, even though research indicates that when they do educational outcomes and student performance rise substantially. Faculties have been even more reluctant to counsel students on “personal,” as distinct from academic and career matters, even though research indicates that intellectual, physical, and emotional development are closely intertwined. In some countries, notably in the United States, a profession of student affairs specialists has developed to assist faculties with the guidance tasks of the university experience.

Several SUO students voiced the concern that they cannot see the relationship between their studies and future career and employment options. One lamented that she is an advanced student in law and yet has no idea what a practicing attorney does; nor has she ever visited an attorney's office, much less been an office intern. Other students expressed "fear" about meeting faculty members or noted that they do not keep appointments with students, or are otherwise difficult to reach in such a large university.
Before this consultation, the rectorate had asked the advisors to address questions of "placement" of students in careers and employment. When other students observed that the University provides too little information about academic programs and related career prospects to prospective students, faculty members present cited recent improvements in communications and public information which address that concern.

Suggestions:

- Student guidance is an integral part of the learning community and can yield practical benefits for the students, faculties and the entire University. Substantial direct involvement by faculty members is highly desirable.

- Individual guidance is needed, but various methods of group guidance must be used to assist large numbers of students, and to manage time and administrative pressures on faculty and staff: orientations, issue-specific seminars, group field-trips to workplaces, special programming for groups such as first-year students, interns. Individual guidance can be aided by new information technology software which assists faculty members to help students make educational plans, to make course choices and register, and to link academic student with co-curricular experiences like internships and study abroad. Given its interest and expertise in technology applications, SUO may well want to give technology-aided student guidance a high priority.

- "Guidance" can be built into the curriculum. For example, to deal with the curriculum-career connection, many universities have cooperative and internship programs which integrate theoretical inquiry with periods of employment in the workplaces and professions to which students are headed. Such programs develop student sense of purpose, enable them to make academic and career choices more easily, and introduce them to networks of individuals which will assist their entering careers and jobs after graduation. Importantly, full course credit is often given for cooperative and internship programs. The advisors are very much aware that it will be difficult to establish cooperative and internship programs in an environment where such programs have no tradition and where the professional sector may initially react skeptically. It is for the University to take the first steps and to overcome any reserve by continuous efforts. Less demanding workplace-connections, such as site visits by students with their professors, have been successful first steps elsewhere in the world. SUO should not be surprised either if there is enthusiastic reception for such initiatives.

- Guidance should begin with student admission to the University and continue throughout the degree program. Career preparation and guidance, for example, should begin as prospective students receive the first information about SUO, and certainly as they register, so that ultimately career and job "placement" is relatively easy as an administrative process rather than being a late-hour race to get an anxious and under-prepared student a job. If SUO could master this domain, it would become distinctive among Croatian and world universities. Bradford College, in the U.S., encourages new students to develop a computer-based "Bradford Planner" which specifies (and can be adapted year-by-year) what academic program, courses, and practical experiences like internships, voluntary service, and study abroad will be sought in order to develop the competencies necessary for a specific career.

**Student Services**

There was not much discussion of, and certainly no close examination of the several services which the University does provide or might provide its students: residential (currently beds for 285 students, or just over three percent of total student population), dining, academic and personal counseling, clubs and sports, international student exchange, or the like.

Suggestions:

- The advisors have little sense of the intentions or plans of the University for remaining mainly or wholly a commuter institution, or on the other hand, for expanding the residential component. To state the obvious, whether and how student services are offered flows from whether the students commute or live in SUO facilities. Similarly, whether SUO faculties remain highly dispersed in buildings throughout Osijek, or are consolidated in or closer to a Tvrda "campus," will shape student needs for services and how they are provided. Longer-term planning for this domain, would certainly be advantageous.

- While it is clear that vice rectors and faculty members individually and together carry heavy workloads, it could be highly beneficial to appoint a vice rector and individuals in each of the faculties(at least on a part-time basis) to assure that appropriate student services are provided, and that student concerns such as were addressed in this consultation regularly get attention.
  Universities in the United States and other countries typically have professional student affairs/services staffs headed by a vice-president or dean of students. Liberal arts and science colleges philosophically divide education into the "curricular" and "co-curricular," the latter signifying the non-academic components of university education, such as learning through participation in student or university governance. Another approach to "staffing" the important student affairs function would be to exempt a small number of teaching staff from part of their teaching load so that they may facilitate all-University attention to student needs such as academic and personal counseling, participation in

governance, services, timely information about study abroad opportunities, or the like.

- Students Services may well be charged to assist student leaders to participate meaningfully in University governance. The advisors were pleased to note that students are members of the University Senate, but also recognize that effective participation cannot be taken for granted and requires attention and cultivation. If universities are not schools for democratic participation, of course, which institutions will be?

- The Rector and the Office of International Relations are to be commended for seeking international ties and resources, such as through the Salzburg Seminar, faculty exchanges as under the U.S. Fulbright Senior Scholars Program, and international student exchanges. The advisors can only urge: Press ahead!

### *Towards Implementation*

Recognizing that SUO seeks improvements in how it addresses student needs and roles, and in the application of information and other technologies, but that it has organizational and resource constraints to overcome, the advisors have these suggestions about approaches to implementation.

- In conditions of organizational constraint and limited resources, it is sometimes best to demonstrate the application of new ideas in a sphere of the University most amenable to change and testing new ideas. The new relationship between the rectorate and the faculty of education may afford opportunities to initiate new academic programs and student services, ideally also involving other faculties, based on ideas from this consultation or other sources. The advisors sense that the opportunity is great enough to warrant the allocation of additional resources for a pilot project based within the faculty of education.

- Since significant authority in University affairs still resides in individual faculties, cooperation among them, and with the rectorate, is imperative if there is to be an University-wide learning community. These discussions emphasized the potential benefits of inter-faculty cooperation to create new market-sensitive, interdisciplinary academic programs; to create a University strategic plan for the acquisition and application of information technologies to the learning process; to address the problems of the course credit and exam systems; and to assure adequate student services across the University.

- Given Croatia's nationally regulated and budgeted higher education system, changes at campus-level(in curriculum, faculty roles, technology allocations, etc.) are often dependent on changes of policy and practice at the national level. SUO's active participation in the University Rectors' Conference and, through two delegates, in the National Council for Higher Education, are means through

which it can simultaneously seek the adoption of a national policy and legal framework favorable to appropriate initiatives at SUO.

- SUO has rightly identified the introduction of a full-fledged course credit system as one of its priorities for reforming and restructuring its curriculum. To implement that priority, it is suggested that SOU: (a) build support by initiating a University-wide discussion of it; and (b) develop a proposal which might attract additional funds and expertise with which to create a new system.

- SUO's strategy of developing international ties to exchange ideas, faculty and students, and perhaps to acquire resources, should certainly be continued.

## *Conclusion*

This report has followed and elaborated the outline of the advisors' oral report to Rector Kralik and her colleagues at the end of the three-day consultation. Of course, the worth of the advisors' observations and suggestions, based necessarily on impressions and inferences drawn from the discussions, must be decided by the rectorate, faculties, and students.

The advisors, however, see their visit as part of an on-going, two-way relationship between SUO and the Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar. It is hoped that the leadership of SUO will respond to the visit and report, in part, by sending their observations and comments to the Salzburg Seminar. The advisors will look forward to this response and have learned much from the consultations at J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek.