

The Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar
Visiting Advisors Report

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Introduction

During their four day visit, the Visiting Advisors met with a group of more than thirty members of Masaryk University (MU) for intense and wide-ranging discussions about the future development of the University. The team was much impressed by the sense of purpose and buoyancy of all those whom they met and who expressed thoughts and concerns about the further advancement of their institution. The advisors felt that MU had embarked on a dynamic process of institutional change. There was a palpable sense of enthusiasm for the university and a great amount of eagerness to initiate innovative policies that represent an invaluable asset MU can build upon. Hence, the recurrent theme throughout all discussions was the notion of strategic management of collective change within the institution.

Constraints and Opportunities

Any process of strategic planning requires a basic analysis of constraints and opportunities as the starting point for future-oriented reflection and action. Bearing in mind the complexity of the challenges that the MU faces, the team identified three fundamental constraints:

1. lack of financial resources. In the case of the MU—and the universities in Central and Eastern Europe more generally—lack of financial resources is not a trivial concern but a persistent obstacle to meaningful and serious institutional reform in higher education.

2. A sustained commitment to the status quo and the lack of interest in changing higher education on the part of political and economic decision-makers at the national and regional level;

3. traditional disciplinary structures that continue to shape the organization of individual faculties and study programs. Such structures result in fragmentation, difficult internal communication, and a tendency towards isolation of individual organizational units (departments, chairs etc). The resulting lack of institutional wholeness, and global vision hinders the development of common perspectives and shared strategies with regard to policies of change.

On the other hand, several specific opportunities to affect change may be catalyzed by the following factors:

1. the new 1998 law on higher education in the Czech Republic which strengthens the role of the university as an integrated, organic institution. "*The whole is more than the sum of its parts*" could become a possible motto of development. At the same time, the law adds a new element to the internal structure of the university: the Board of Trustees. An administrative body with outside representatives, its aim is twofold: to open the university to broader influences and concerns by linking the institution to political/economic decision-makers while calling for greater accountability of the university as a social partner in the process of local/regional/national development;

2. the new rectorate of MU which began its three-year term at the beginning of the 1998/99 academic year. It builds on the impetus for change evoked by the previous rectorate while pursuing new objectives with a new style of leadership;

3. the process of accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union which involves a thorough revision of institutional structures and legal provisions.

Agenda

Prior to the visit of the Salzburg Seminar team, MU working groups prepared detailed information in three target areas that the University requested the team to focus on during its stay in Brno. These areas were:

International Ties/Accreditation
Fundraising and Financing
Integration of Studies/Credit System

In submitting this report, the team assumes that the specific questions and problems underlying these target areas are known in the institution. We would like, however, to voice a special word of praise to those in charge of the preparation of the visit: the information provided to the team in advance, as well as the coordination of the program during the visit proved exemplary. The efficient preparation of the visit bodes well for a university that strives for a high degree of organizational efficiency and administrative professionalism.

The group of MU representatives involved in the discussions during the visit included the Rector and his Vice-Rectors, Deans and Vice-Deans of various faculties, Chairs and Heads of departments, members of the Board of Trustees as well as students and administrators. The readiness and commitment of so many individuals from all sectors of MU to participate in this voluntary exercise was impressive. Visitors were left with the definite impression that in all constituent parts of the university, there is a willingness to form and contribute to what might be called a "learning organization".

During the visit, the discussions were organized in such a way that each target area was addressed in three different rounds, roughly characterized as (a) exploratory, (b) deliberative and (c) conclusive. For some of these meetings, the visiting advisors team split in order to maximize the time for intense deliberations. The overall arrangement of the discussions proved to be conducive to participatory and well-focused dialogues between MU representatives and the team.

Focal issues

Mindful of the three areas of concerns that MU had proposed as the focus of the visit, the team identified the following issues to be central in terms of possible future action:

1. Integration

(a) ***academic integration***. Increased efforts to implement an institution-wide credit system (on the basis of the European Credit Transfer System—ECTS) would allow for greater cooperation between different departments and faculties, more student-orientation, and more transparency—also vis-à-vis national and international competitors.

(b) ***intra-institutional integration.*** Formulating an institutional development plan that outlines and prioritizes the strategic choices of MU in terms of future prospects (new buildings, new faculties etc) would facilitate intra-institutional integration.

(c) ***inter-institutional integration***. Inter-institutional integration can be achieved by actively promoting cooperation with universities as well as public institutions and private corporations at the local, regional, national, and international level—particularly regarding transborder cooperation with Austria and Bavaria.

(d) ***integration with the larger community***. Support for MU, generally, and professional programs, such as law and medicine, in particular, could be generated by seeking integration with larger community, including the business sector. The Board of Trustees could play an important role here to help realize the potential unleashed by their creation.

2. Budget and Fundraising

Securing the financial viability of an institution is vital, but it should not be seen as an end in itself. Rather, the mobilization of institutional potential for development and the strategy for fund-raising should go hand-in-hand.

(a) At MU, the main source of income is the students, for whom the state budget provides a predetermined amount of money directly to the University according to a normative formula (number of students multiplied by cost of study). With the closer integration of the university as a whole and the possibility for students to choose their courses across department and faculty boundaries, the University should rethink its policy of redistribution of student-related state funds. The guiding principle should be to strengthen the University's social identity as one institution.

Foreign students who pay tuition fees to study at MU may still be low in numbers but they provide valuable external resources. Apart from financial benefits, these students can help MU to further strengthen its profile as a “client-oriented” institution since they require certain services (e.g. instruction in a foreign language, local support) which are critical for a modern, student-centered and forward-looking university.

(b) Community relevance must be one of the key strengths of MU as it attempts to improve its financial status. Given the saga of the institution, there can be no doubt that MU has a strong national/Moravian identity; at the same time, the university is striving to enhance its international reputation. The best way for MU to demonstrate community relevance is by reconciling these two characteristics and by using existing synergies between national/local and international/global opportunities.

(c) Political lobbying (in the broadest sense) is an indispensable instrument to secure financial support for a public institution. It is to be hoped that the establishment of a new Regional Assembly in Moravia will present MU with the opportunity to lobby for stronger patronage from political players.

3. Leadership

With the introduction of the new law on higher education, universities in the Czech Republic are facing a critical period of institutional development and re-adjustment. The new legal status as public institutions, the establishment of the Board of Trustees as a new element of internal organization and decision-making, but also the possible emergence of private higher education institutions as competitors on the “educational market,” as well as other provisions in the new law will all have profound consequences on the role and responsibilities of university leadership. The Visiting Advisors team is confident that MU leaders are well prepared to meet these challenges successfully. In this respect, three qualities are of paramount importance:

(a) ***Continuity***. As mentioned earlier, advisors assume that the transition from the former to the current rectorate has been characterized by continuity in terms of overall goals and objectives.

(b) ***Ability to mobilize a dynamic, forward-looking attitude within the MU***. Like many incoming leaders, Rector Zlatuska and his team have been given the opportunity to make a fresh start, to inspire the university with a new momentum, and to encourage experimentation and innovation. The Visiting Advisors team was delighted to sense a spirit of optimism, confidence, and a true concern for the well-being of the institution at all levels of the MU.

(c) ***Profiling the institutional identity and the public image of MU***. As an entity, the university must constantly re-invent and re-position itself with regard to its environment. It is one of the genuine tasks of the leadership to ensure that this process of profiling the University's identity is progressing and to initiate the necessary internal as well as external communication efforts. Again, the latest changes in the law on higher education in the Czech Republic open new possibilities, e.g. through the involvement of the Board of Trustees in reaching out to the external community and exploring the public image of the MU.

OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The Visiting Advisors team would like to share observations and suggestions about specific issues that were presented to them over the course of the visit.

1. Integration of Studies/Credit System:

Throughout Europe, universities are re-examining their curricula in order to serve a changing student clientele and evolving social needs; a response to internal and external pressures. Overall, there is a move from a supply-driven to a demand-driven institution. This development reflects changes in the nature of knowledge production and distribution as well as changes in learning patterns. In many Central and Eastern European universities, the introduction of ECTS has become an effective agent of change toward a more demand-oriented curricula design. It must be stressed, however, that the ECTS is but a tool, not an end in itself. Apart from its main purpose –to facilitate cross-border cooperation and student mobility among European higher education institutions—it has proved to be a useful instrument for thorough assessment and revision of the existing curricular structures within a given university. From a more general viewpoint, the efforts to introduce ECTS have had a positive effect on evaluating the rigidly prescribed curricula of the past and on considering or establishing more flexible and less closely structured study programs.

The team wholeheartedly supports MU's commitment to implement a new information system, required by the launch of a university-wide credit system. Members accept both the rationale and the principles of this new information system, as presented during the visit. While the difficulties and burden of work (and costs) underlying the implementation of this system should not be underestimated, once in place, the system will engineer a qualitative leap in efficiency of communication, integration of studies, variety of study choices across faculty borders, and a host of other positive effects. In other words, the most important benefit of the new information system will lie in its dramatic enhancement of transparency at MU.

During discussions with representatives of various faculties of MU, the Advisors understood that there is concern over a more flexible, cross-faculty approach to curriculum design. Understandably, some staff members are hesitant to accept change or question established practices because they are unsure how this will affect their own position within the institution. It should be noted, however, that an explicit institutional policy of promoting more transparency and openness may eventually benefit MU as a whole. If MU can demonstrate its true commitment to the notion of "service to students as learners," this will place it in the forefront of higher education reform in the Czech Republic and will give it a definitive advantage over competitors on the educational market.

Cross-faculty curricula offerings raise budgetary concerns. The current regulation, by which state funding for the MU is allocated to individual faculties based on the number of students, impedes a more cooperative and sensible means of providing an attractive (and more appropriate) study program that combines courses from various faculties. These obstacles must be overcome. It would be paradoxical for an internal allocation mechanism to prevent the university from becoming more open to its own students, more responsive to the needs of its own community and, ultimately, truer to its mission.

The Visiting Advisors would like to stress that the adoption of a student-centered curriculum policy will undoubtedly have a far-reaching impact on the entire university. Moving from a supply-side to a demand-driven institution is a fundamental change of paradigm which requires readiness by all academic actors to accept new institutional norms and practices. It should be noted that between the two poles—supply and demand—there is a continuum. Thus, once the decisive change of direction is taken, it is still left to MU to decide how far it wants to go toward a fully demand-driven policy.

2. The Medical School Expansion: Opportunity But Cautionary Warnings

One of the significant opportunities facing MU is the planned expansion and relocation of its school of medicine and basic science faculties to the extended campus next to the hospital at Bohunice.

It represents an occasion to complete historic plans for strengthening and improving the University's School of Medicine, which could play an even greater role as a leading health care center for Brno as well as the region of Southern Moravia. Not only would the School be relocated in new and vastly improved facilities, but the basic sciences would also be located in Bohunice. This is the correct direction for modern academic medicine. Moreover, the relocation of the various units that are part of the proposed project would allow much-needed space in other parts of the MU campus to be re-designated and converted into modern facilities.

Although the advantages both in facilities and in closer programmatic collaboration and integration from the planned medical school expansion are obvious, there are formidable hurdles and potential dangers in the proposed project. First, vast financial resources totaling at least $250 million must be found in order for the plan to be completed as currently contemplated. This is a daunting challenge in any country under any circumstances. We must note our concern that unless significant funds can be attracted, the project will remain a wonderful dream. It could be realized if state support

(amounting to at least half of the total cost) could be joined with philanthropic donations and investments by businesses that foresee a regional advantage associated with medical school development and expansion.

The team considers the motivations behind medical school expansion and closer academic linkage a positive development, but feels compelled to warn against unreasonable expectations about its implementation in the near future. While the project is important in the planning for MU's future, it would be unfortunate if it were to consume too much of the time and energy of the Rector and his staff—especially in light of other opportunities and initiatives in the future of this exciting, growing university.

As an alternative to the current plans, the leadership of MU might consider the possibility of a step-by-step approach. Starting with the planned enlargement of existing facilities, it would gradually be expanded, adding new buildings for institutes of science which promise to develop immediate synergies with the intellectual resources already located in Bohunice, next to the hospital. This approach, combining narrow financial means with maximum growth in terms of scientific potential, would require extra efforts with regard to academic foresight and strategic vision. Nevertheless, whatever the development plans for the expansion of MU's Medical School are, it should be kept in mind that these plans need to be consistent with the university mission: to provide optimal conditions to students as learners. In the case of Bohunice, this would mean that the new facilities should not only improve the profile of MU as a center of excellence in terms of research, but should also introduce innovative forms and modalities of teaching such as Problem Based Learning, multimedia instruction and, above all, individualized learning in small classes.

3. The Trusteeship Innovation

As a consequence of the new Czech Higher Education Reform Act of 1998, all Czech Universities, including Masaryk, now have Boards of Trustees. The MU Board consists of important lay business and civic leaders and provides a potentially useful community interface for the growth and expansion of the institution. Although advisory to the Rector, the Board's advice should be influential, since it could serve as a vehicle for transmitting public concerns and needs to MU leaders. Equally important, it could become an advocate for the needs of the university, both in Moravia and throughout the Czech Republic.

For example, working with and through the Rector, the Board of Trustees could become a powerful advocate for urgently needed funding with both the planned Regional Assembly of Moravia and the central government in Prague. If MU is to fulfill its mission of service to the people and society of Moravia in the twenty-first century—where high quality education that utilizes information technologies is a critical ingredient for economic and social progress—an investment in improved resources must be made. Similarly, the trustees could lead committees that are open to other opinion leaders in the region, thereby enhancing fundraising opportunities in an environment in which the most successful and best universities are flexible, responsive to public needs and entrepreneurial. This seems particularly important in view of the constrained resources that limit MU's development, despite its new "public" status. Linked to the emergence of a Board of Trustees, this new status provides an opportunity to develop additional

sources of support in creative and pro-active ways, consistent with the University's fundamental mission of education and public service.

In addition to its role as an advocate of public needs and concerns within the University, and of University needs within the public realm, the Board of Trustees can be an important agent in internal decision-making processes, especially in difficult or controversial situations that call for unfamiliar solutions. The Board of Trustees could become an intermediary for innovative courses of action by supporting the Rector, whenever the implementation of specific institutional policies might be viewed as problematic in the eyes of individual groups within the University.

4. International Profile

The Visiting Advisors team was impressed to see the eagerness of MU to place itself on the map of international higher education—an effort coordinated primarily by the International Office and the Vice Deans for International Affairs. MU has close to forty bi-lateral agreements with partner universities and faculties abroad. It is a member of several international associations, and is active in the European Union's Tempus and Socrates programs. Furthermore, MU has taken measures to increase its international visibility and its exchange activities by

(a) creating an International Outreach Committee
(b) developing a Central European Studies Program for students from abroad as well as the TESOL TE Program
(c) participating in educational fairs and conferences
(d) offering to host the Academic Information Center for Czech students in a newly-reconstructed university building.

However, MU representatives also described various challenges with regard to international relations. Some may only be dealt with at a political level. The decision to terminate the recognition of university degrees for graduates of Greek nationality when studying in English at MU Medical Faculty is an example. Other challenges, like the relatively low levels of student and faculty mobility (both incoming and outgoing) are more complex.

The Visiting Advisors team understands and appreciates that, thus far, MU's international relations have been driven by opportunity rather than by a set plan. It is important for MU to adopt a more focused and strategic approach toward international relations, mindful of the defining factors of MU's identity.

Masaryk University was founded in 1919 in the wake of the formation of Czechoslovakia as an independent nation-state. The identity of MU, therefore, is closely linked to the history of Czech(oslovakian) independence and to the region of Moravia. Another defining factor of MU's identity is its "peripheral" position in relation to the "center," which, in the context of Czech higher education, is Charles University in Prague. As a consequence of the process of closer European integration, both parameters, nation-state and periphery, are evidently subject to a change in meaning—a change that is

likely to offer a number of excellent prospects for MU to strengthen its international profile.

The Advisors feel that universities in general and MU in particular should consider themselves to be forceful agents of a common academic Europe. They should embody the rhetoric of European integration and initiate the process of integration with their next-door neighbors. What could be the contribution of Central European universities, which share a common history and face similar problems, to the definition of a common European area of higher education? The Visiting Advisors team recommends initiating new or expanding extant bilateral cooperation agreements with universities in Austria, Germany, Poland and Slovakia with the aim of developing these agreements into multilateral, structured collaboration or consortia of institutions ready to involve staff and students in their collaborative schemes.

Transborder cooperation could materialize in various forms:

(a) ***administrative***. "Staff-exchanges" among staff who have similar functions (for instance, international relations officers), could be part of staff development programs. This would motivate personnel to learn languages, alleviate the feeling of provincialization vis-à-vis Prague and help develop common points of reference with regard to specific activities in different institutions

(b) ***didactic***. A teacher-exchange program would enable teaching staff from different universities to prepare common programs and, eventually, joint degrees by way of offering a broad range of courses in cooperating institutions. A prime example would be in medicine where combined programs with universities in Austria or Germany would make it difficult for other foreign authorities not to recognize the quality of training at MU.

(c) ***service.*** Common cross-border initiatives such as infrastructure planning, economic consulting, or joint in-service training programs would facilitate trans-border cooperation, which meet specific demands of regional governments or industries.

EUCOR, a network of universities in the upper Rhine region, or ALMA, an association of universities in the German-Dutch-Belgian triangle, are examples of university transborder collaboration. These networks demonstrate various levels of cooperation: from sharing information and privileged relations to common activities and even to joint bench-marking projects like "mutual learning consortia" (various universities helping each other to focus and rationalize institutional development through comparison.) Whatever the concrete manifestation of international cooperation, it should always aim at increasing the sense of confidence of MU in its own competencies and thus its sense of pride in its work.

"*Building Europe on one's own doorsteps*" should be the guiding credo for such a regional cross-border approach toward internationalization. The Advisors are confident that this approach will evoke a positive response—and possibly support— from many sides, including political and economic leaders.

Towards a Deliberative University

The notion and the implications of strategic management of collective change were the most prominent thematic threads of the discussions during the team's visit at MU. In view of the constraints and opportunities that presently face MU, the leadership of the University should strive to reach a common perception of the developmental potential of the institution. It must articulate what needs to be done to activate this potential. The team is aware that strategic planning is a laborious undertaking at any university. As a self-governing institution, the university often must deal with highly diffuse processes of deliberation and decision-making. Given the dynamism and aspiration for improvement demonstrated at MU, there is reason to be optimistic that university leadership will be able to develop a systematic strategic self-evaluation procedure[1].

Three elements would be critical to such an undertaking:

(a) The role of the **Rector**, who must ensure a non-threatening environment by making it clear that the rationale of the strategic self-evaluation is to unlock the capacity for change, adaptation and synergy within MU. The Rector must be the "guarantor" of strategy discussions by supporting communication along horizontal lines of responsibility and competence. At the same time, the Rector is the crucial interface between the deliberative and the executive interests of the University.

(b) The role of the Board of **Trustees**, which can provide critical links to the outside world and enhance the self-perception of the University.

(c) A strategic **Task Force** (or perhaps a limited number of thematically focused strategy committees) consisting of individuals from inside and outside MU, which would set the agenda for the strategic self-evaluation procedure and elaborate suggestions, scenarios, and operational policies for possible change. Such a Task Force would provide a forum for deliberation where key staff members (i.e. the informal opinion leaders) and the primary beneficiaries of MU (i.e. its share- and stakeholders) could convene to envisage the future of the institution. For the Task Force to act as a strategic think-tank as well as a sounding board of ideas and concerns regarding the future direction of MU, it would be important to separate the deliberative from the executive function. Therefore, the Task Force should be appointed by and meet under the aegis of the top advisory entity of the University, namely the Board of Trustees. The Rector would play a part in discussion but should not run the Task Force. He should implement the suggestions put forward by the Task Force—suggestions that the Rector will need to seek approval for by the relevant bodies of the University, most notably by the Academic Council and the Senate.

[1] The Association of European Universities (CRE) recently published a very useful book on this issue which provides basic guidance in a readable format: Pierre Tabatoni and Andris Barblan*, Principles and practice of strategic management in universities: Vol 1 Principles*, Geneva 1998

Conclusions

To summarize, the Visiting Advisors team would like to see MU develop its potential along three main lines: transparency, flexibility, and cohesion. We believe that MU is ready to generate a new vision that integrates all parts of the institution into a deliberative university. As a motto, we would suggest: *more Bauhaus and less Baroque architecture!*

Caveat: We are not the prophets of your future—*it lies in your own hands!*

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Visiting Advisors Team

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Andris Barblan has served as the secretary general of the Association of European Universities (CRE) since 1976. The CRE is the coordinating body of more than five hundred universities from over forty European countries. The group organizes international conferences for university heads on the management and development of university institutions in Europe. Dr. Barblan also a member of the administrative board of the European Centre for the Strategic Management of Universities in Brussels. He received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Geneva, and currently serves as a member of the Universities Project Advisory Committee.

Jochen Fried ***Germany***

Jochen Fried is director of the Universities Project. He is the former head of programs at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna. Dr. Fried was a lecturer in German language and literature at the University of Ljubljana from 1986 to 1988 and from 1991 to 1993, and at Cambridge University from 1984 to 1986, under the auspices of the German Academic Exchange Service. From 1988 to 1991, he was a senior officer in the secretariat of the German Science Council. Dr. Fried is a graduate of the University of Düsseldorf, where he received his Ph.D. in 1984.

Neil Robert Grabois ***USA***

Neil Grabois has been the President of Colgate University, New York since 1988. A former professor of mathematics at Williams College, Massachusetts, he has also been a visiting scholar at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is currently a member of the Pew Foundation Science Advisory Committee and a member of the Association of American Colleges Board of Directors. Dr. Grabois received his Ph.D. in mathematics in 1963 from the University of Pennsylvania.

Peter Magrath ***USA***

Peter Magrath assumed the presidency of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC) in 1991. With a long history of leadership in international education activities, Dr. Magrath was appointed in 1992 to a commission on the Future of the National Science Foundation to help chart future directions for the foundation. A political scientist with a Ph.D. from Cornell University, Dr. Magrath served as president of three universities: the University of Missouri System, the University of Minnesota, and the State University of New York at Binghamton, and held faculty and administrative posts at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and Brown University. He is also the author of numerous books, monographs and articles.

THE UNIVERSITIES PROJECT OF THE SALZBURG SEMINAR

Universities throughout the world are undergoing systemic changes in their governance, academic design, structure, and mission. The Salzburg Seminar's Universities Project focuses on higher education reform in Central and East Europe, Russia, and the Newly Independent States as universities in these regions redefine their relationships with governments and try to become more integrated into the global intellectual community.

The Universities Project is a multi-year series of conferences and symposia convening senior representatives of higher education from the designated regions with their counterparts from North America and West Europe. Discussion in the Project's programs focuses on the following themes:

- University Administration and Finance
- Academic Structure and Governance within the University
- Meeting Students' Needs, and the Role of Students in Institutional Affairs
- Technology in Higher Education
- The University and Civil Society

OBJECTIVES

While specific institutional reforms undoubtedly vary from country to country, in all cases universities and other institutions of higher learning are seeking to reshape themselves in ways that will prepare them more fully for the twenty-first century. Even as these institutions are considering extensive systemic changes in their academic design, structure, and mission, all desire autonomy in governance and in their intellectual life. Accordingly, the Universities Project aims to promote the higher education reform process by inviting senior administrators to participate in conferences and symposia concerning issues of university management, administration, finance, and governance. In addition, the Project seeks to encourage the creation of networks among senior administrators of higher education institutions.

To further these goals, the Universities Project is developing a significant electronic dimension. Through the established technological resources of the American Studies Center, the Project is exploring ways in which the conferences and symposia can be made available to the benefit of a larger audience.

THE VISITING ADVISORS PROGRAM (VAP)

The Salzburg Seminar launched this enhanced aspect of the Universities Project in the autumn of 1998. Under this program, teams of university presidents and higher education experts visit universities in Central and East Europe and Russia at the host institutions' request to assist in the process of institutional self-assessment and change. By the end of 1999, approximately sixteen VAP visits will have taken place, twelve to universities in East and Central Europe, and four to Russian universities. A full schedule of visits is planned for 2000.

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For More Information

For more information regarding the Salzburg Seminar's Visiting Advisors Program, the University Project, and Salzburg Seminar programs, please contact one of the Seminar's offices below.

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