

THE UNIVERSITIES PROJECT OF THE SALZBURG SEMINAR
VISITING ADVISORS REPORT

ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA UNIVERSITY
IASI, ROMANIA

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***Team Members*:**

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Introduction

During their four-day visit at the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iasi, Romania (AICU), the Visiting Advisors (VA) met with the Rector and his Vice-Rectors, Deans and Vice-Deans of various faculties, chairs and heads of departments as well as administrators and a group of students. The team was impressed with the determination of the leadership of the University to increase the quality of its programs and to assure a sustained commitment to institutional self-reform throughout the entire university. The team was met with cordial and gracious hospitality, and a spirit of frankness and eagerness to share knowledge and experience characterized the discussions. The mission of the team was to suggest new approaches and changes, which would help accomplish the stated goals of the leadership of the A.I. Cuza University.

Prior to the visit of the advisors team, AICU had identified six major areas of concern on which it requested consultation. These areas were:

- Quality assurance - the setting up of strategic objectives for the university
- Organization of the University Board
- Extra-budgetary financing sources
- Development of a flexible curriculum to meet market demands
- Scientific research and postgraduate studies
- Internal and international co-operation

The meetings of the team with the colleagues from AICU roughly followed this agenda. However, in the course of the discussions it became clear that most of the questions under the six different headings were interrelated and that an integrated approach was needed.

The team, therefore, sought to identify a central theme for AICU in order to provide a focal point for the analysis and report. The consensus was that AICU is clearly determined to develop an institutional process that would insure a continued improvement of its teaching and research efforts and serve as a prime educational force in the province of Moldova and in Romania. All observations and suggestions that are included in this report are intended to help promote this fundamental goal: how can AICU maintain this process of institutional change and reinforce it so that it becomes irreversible?

It was obvious to the team that AICU is very much an institution devoted to quality teaching and research. Ranking among the top universities in Romania, it counts many distinguished alumni among its graduates. However, the institution is not satisfied with the status quo, and seeks to do more through its strategic planning efforts and by obtaining external advice. Their hope is that this advice will help chart a path for the future and permit the institution to achieve its goals.

The "Culture" of Iasi

Every university acquires a personality, a unique culture of its own, through its operations over time and its relationships with numerous constituencies. There is no single method for acquiring new knowledge and for imparting this knowledge to those served in its classrooms. All institutions seek to develop various degrees of efficiency in utilizing resources and delivering services. There is much similarity among institutions but there are also significant differences. AICU is one of a number of universities in Romania, but there are some differences in culture and personality, which give it a unique role in Romanian higher education. In a very real sense, a "corporate identity" emerges over time. For AICU the identity must be to institutionalize the commitment to quality through structural changes and substantive reforms, and to strive to be a leader in the changes taking place in Romania.

The VA acknowledge the fact that the severe financial constraints which are characteristic for Romanian higher education in general make it exceedingly difficult for any university to develop its culture in a carefully planned and consistent manner. On the other hand, however, financial pressures force the universities to rethink their traditional norms and structures. They can bring about decisions which are unavoidable if the viability of the institution as a whole is to be preserved. The leadership of AICU is thus challenged to find the optimal balance between preservation and innovation—it cannot preserve the culture of the university unless it takes determined innovative action; and it cannot innovate unless it creates a university-wide consensus about what is worth preserving and strengthening.

The VA found considerable interaction between external constituencies such as the World Bank, the European Community, the Romanian Ministry of Education and AICU. There is also much cooperation among several state universities in Romania. This can be advantageous, for example in setting of standards and sharing of experiences among institutions. It can be disadvantageous, however, when it prevents institutions from embarking upon individual initiatives and educational innovation. AICU seems to have overcome numerous obstacles through effective leadership. The committee found many instances of new paths that have been embarked upon for innovation. Yet, AICU is

not satisfied with the status quo, and it seeks to accomplish more in the future even though it is limited by a restricted resource and financial base. It was the mission of the visitors to suggest new paths, which would lead to the improvement of existing programs, and new innovative programs, which would serve the students more effectively. This report suggests a few directions that AICU might consider in its quest for increased quality.

I. Means and Ends: Organizational Structures and Substantive Changes

The process of institutionalizing quality on a continuing basis involves redesigning organizational structures, as well as identifying substantive programs, which need to be initiated or changed. The basic unit is the department, and departments are clustered within colleges, faculties, schools, or institutes. Each department usually focuses upon one discipline or specialization. Faculty research takes place within this departmental unit, and students work toward degrees or diplomas within these specialized departmental areas.

While the departmental approach has served academe well in the past, there is compelling evidence that new knowledge is increasingly generated in areas, which border traditional disciplines, or, indeed, blur disciplinary boundaries. Knowledge is ever-changing and very often disciplines build a rigidity, which impedes the development of new areas of research or newer needs for classroom instruction. For example, public administration is now recognized in many countries as a growing discipline, yet it borrows its knowledge base from several disciplines such as political science, economics, civil engineering, sociology, and law. A student's curriculum and eventual major, therefore, is best achieved by an interdisciplinary amalgam of these separate disciplines in preparing professionals for governmental work. The flexibility of utilizing knowledge from these several disciplines offers better preparation than four years of work in any of the above disciplines alone. Thus, Schools of Public Administration are formed to achieve more optimal delivery systems in the preparation of public administration professionals.

Several other examples of this interdisciplinary approach are suggested as examples:

- international diplomacy—curriculum includes history, languages, geography, economics, political science, and law;
- environmental studies—curriculum includes economics, biology, political science, engineering, and law;
- American/European studies—curriculum includes history, economics, literature, political science, and philosophy.

Thus, an amalgam of carefully selected courses provides a student with the tools of understanding critical borderline areas between and among disciplines. This interdisciplinary approach is often neglected by specialized departments, which are discipline-oriented and provide only courses for students within their own departmental offerings. One approach is faculty-discipline oriented—looking back, as it were, at how those faculty were educated; the other is student-market/society-needs oriented—

looking prospectively. One is inflexible; the other offers flexibility and an opportunity to gain new knowledge, which may exist on the borders of disciplines.

The VA are not suggesting a random collection of courses, nor are they suggesting the adoption of short-term fashionable curriculum changes which often dilute the rigor of academic programs. The team suggests instead a vehicle for combining aspects of various disciplines to address more meaningful academic directions and societal needs. The best thinking of a number of disciplines would be combined in offerings such as public administration, environmental studies, biotechnology, diplomacy, applied sciences (e.g. to become an effective chemist in industry, one needs to know more than just chemistry) but would not be limited to these areas.

An interdisciplinary offering would start with a student's needs (or the needs of the marketplace) and then work back to develop an appropriate combination of courses to meet the need. This model already exists within Alice's School of Management. The team recommends considering the applicability of this model to other offerings and needs.

Students may be of the opinion (as one said in the meeting with the Visiting Advisors) that "the notion of creativity does not exist in the Romanian education system." AICU should make every effort to prove that in fact it is possible to establish at least islands of creativity within the university.

Recommendation #1—Establish a School of Interdisciplinary Studies with the ability to hire faculty from whatever disciplines would be needed to offer interdisciplinary studies programs and degrees to students. A three to five year project might be undertaken with current faculty from other departments whose support has not been among the university's more recent highest priorities.

II. University Council for Quality and Advancement

Many universities are involved in the process of developing what is generally termed a "strategic university plan." This embodies the proposed direction of an institution for a period of time varying from three to five or even in some cases ten years. Reading the "plan" one can obtain insight into the goals and aspirations of a university. AICU has such a plan at the present time.

All too often a planning process offers very laudable aspirations, but then degenerates into a "wish list" of activities proposed for various colleges and departments. A plan is also often relegated to the shelves of a library and is then resurrected for the next planning cycle. The basic problem is one of designating an organizational structure for implementation of the planning process and formulating a coherent and current strategy for carrying out the goals of the plan.

The VA recommend that AICU establish a University Council for Quality and Advancement comprised of an appointed group of individuals from inside and outside the university—entrepreneurial faculty, students, administrators and other stakeholders who represent the 'customers' of AICU 'products', especially from the business and the civic community. The team felt that there is a particular need at AICU to open up and demonstrate responsiveness to public concerns and needs by including the expertise of

non-university leaders in its strategic planning and implementation efforts. In a country which experiences a somewhat unregulated expansion of private providers of higher education, there is special reason for AICU to emphasize its public status and its sense of responsibility for the public good. This can be achieved by overcoming the traditionally self-contained mode of decision-making and by introducing new and meaningful opportunities for 'laypersons' to contribute to the discussions about the direction of AICU.

Since the suggested Council would be advisory to the Rector, its members should be appointed by him/her in close consultation with the Senate and the Student Council of the University, thus assuring a trust relationship. Its chief mission would be to give counsel to the University on how to implement its strategic plan in a mid- to long-term perspective, more specifically, to suggest changes in operational policies which would have the goal of improving quality in teaching, research and outreach of the AICU to the wider community. It would also make recommendations for "ways and means" of locating appropriate resources to accomplish the new goals.

During its visit in Iasi, the VA met several faculty members at AICU who combine vision, experience, and vigor to initiate change. The suggested Council would afford them a mechanism to utilize their considerable talents on behalf of the entire institution. It would also enable the Rector, Senate, and other involved parties to effectuate the strategic plan or to provide an "intelligence and foresight" system in new areas that the institution might embark upon to bring about innovation and change.

Recommendation #2—Establish a University Council For Quality and Innovation to institutionalize the process of considering and adopting appropriate changes, which would enhance quality on a University-wide basis.

III. Research Development Unit

The VA were told by the leadership of AICU that it considers the nourishing of the research profile to be a top priority for the development of the University, thus reaffirming its position as one of the leading higher education institutions in the country. It is true that in Europe the notion of a comprehensive university is often equated with a strong commitment to research. While the team members feel that the promotion of research by faculty should indeed be an integral part of the mission of a university, it also wants to point out that by virtue of the proliferation of research results worldwide and due to the increase of costs for advanced equipment (particularly in the sciences), no university can any longer claim, let alone afford to be equally competitive in all research areas.

Most institutions are chronically short of funds and often scholarly efforts are diminished as a result of this problem. It is, therefore, a genuine task of the leadership of a university to evaluate the institution's strengths and weaknesses with regard to research and to prioritize the scarce funds that are available to this end. The visiting team recognizes the intention of AICU to reinforce its emphasis on research; but it also encourages the university to pursue this intention in a purposeful way by focusing on specific areas and thereby maximizing the effect of investment into research. AICU could consider pooling resources for research on a university-wide level and announce a competition for internal awards of grants for new research projects. The terms of the announcement should make it clear that the competition will not follow the principle of "equal shares for all";

rather, the call for proposals should include a set of criteria such as advancement of interdisciplinary/transdisciplinary work, involvement of junior researchers and students, cooperation with local industry/employers and similar requirements which are helpful to create a more diverse and less conventional research profile at AICU.

Another way of trying to insure a long-term policy to support research is by enhancing the efforts to raise funds. The establishment of a proactive contracts and grants office which would serve as a vehicle for locating potential research grants—including foundation grants—available through national and international sources would assist AICU in its goal of institutional quality. This office would work closely with the vice-rectors and deans to identify priority projects and initiatives. In addition to locating potential grants, this office would conduct seminars and workshops for faculty in preparing successful contract and grant proposals to foundations and other funding sources and facilitating the submission of grant proposals.

Recommendation #3—Introduce criteria for priority research areas at AICU and establish an Office of Research Development (or a Contracts and Grants Office) which would have the function of identifying sources of funding from foundations and other agencies, and assisting the faculty in the preparation and submission of successful proposals through seminars, workshops, and possibly newsletters alerting the campus community to the availability of new sources of funding.

IV. Special Fund for Creative Learning Initiatives

As indicated earlier, the VA recognize that resources are very limited in all Eastern European universities. Nevertheless, it recommends that a number of funding sources be tapped for this initiative to promote new and innovative changes at the university. Among the sources of funding which could be developed are the following:

- a portion of funds from the annual state budget could be earmarked for this fund;
- external funds could be generated from efforts in fund-raising and development;
- a portion of overhead funds from new contracts and grants could be added to this fund.
- the previously discussed Council for Quality and Advancement would disburse accumulated funds on a competitive basis for the following types of activities:

In addition, the University could establish the following:

- post-doctoral fellowships for newly appointed Faculty to study abroad
- awards and grants to projects which offer the opportunity for the university to develop innovative teaching/learning programs could be added to the program;
- special stipends for Faculty who have achieved ratings of “outstanding” in the proposed evaluation plan which will be outlined later in this report.

Recommendation #4—Establish a special fund to support initiatives for the university, which will enhance quality and innovation in teaching and learning activities. The emphasis should be on introducing a more student-centered approach of instruction.

V. University Instructional Resources Center

The imparting of knowledge to students is a vital university function, yet the widespread method of delivering lectures in a classroom setting has not changed much for many institutions over the last fifty years. However there are many new approaches, which have been developed, and new technology, is available for instruction. AICU has begun to utilize some of these new systems in its Open Distance Learning (ODL) Center. The VA encourage the University to expand upon the ODL initiative by integrating it more closely into the core activities of the University and by developing its potential.

It is recommended that a Center for Teaching and Instructional Resources be established to provide opportunities to faculty members and teaching assistants for professional development in teaching, and to enable them to promote student learning. This Center would also be a depository for equipment, which would be available for instructional use. Moreover, the Center would have the responsibility for developing a teacher evaluation instrument for evaluating faculty teaching. Information derived from this system would be compiled for the 5-year review of faculty, which will be outlined below.

Functions performed by the Instructional Resources Center would include the following:

- assist faculty in developing more effective teaching methods based on a survey of the current practice of teaching and learning at AICU which includes both the perspective of teaching staff and students;
- assist faculty in designing a new course catalog that would provide a clear course syllabus and concise course descriptions (based on the commendable efforts of AICU to accommodate its courses to ECTS standards);
- instruct faculty in the use of various types of technology in teaching, including changes in pedagogy occasioned by technology;
- design an instrument for teaching evaluation;
- conduct periodic (5-year) reviews of teaching/research performance of faculty. The Center should be entrusted by the AICU Senate to prepare a study of the various models and modalities of faculty evaluation in different countries, to develop a multi-parameter evaluation scheme that meets the specific needs of AICU, and to devise a detailed procedure for the implementation of this scheme.

Recommendation #5—Establish a Center for Teaching and Instructional Resources as a means to improve the quality of instruction at AICU by promoting the professional development of teaching staff. The Center would have the responsibility of helping to provide the students with more transparent information about their study program, of evaluating performance of faculty, and of acting as a depository of teaching equipment.

VI. Building Bridges to the Community

As has been mentioned earlier in this report, the VA consider it to be of vital importance for the AICU to project a proactive stance in reaching out to the community in and around Iasi. AICU has good reason to believe that it is indeed a main pillar of the cultural and

intellectual development in the Moldavian region. History provides ample proof of this, and in addition, contemporary statistics show that the vast majority of all AICU students come from the town of Iasi itself and from the surrounding area. However, universities can no longer take it for granted that the society honors their role as hotbeds of social, political and economic development to the same extent it did in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Today, universities must vindicate their claim to be a buttress of the societal structure in a new way—the burden of proof is theirs. To put it very bluntly: how are universities of service to society? Unless they can provide a persuasive and non-traditional answer to this question, universities can hardly expect to make themselves heard in the competition for scarce public and private funding.

The answer cannot be found unilaterally. AICU should seek to engage the broader community—the business sector, the public authorities, the political decision-makers, the non-governmental organizations—in a sustained dialogue and interaction that is likely to give new legitimacy to the place and the importance of AICU within its immediate community.

A fine example of how this can be done is the Counseling and Career Placement Centre (CIPO). It offers a genuine service to the 'market' that is looking for AICU graduates while at the same time it satisfies a real demand within the university help students make their way in the professional world.

Recommendation #6—The AICU leadership should reinforce its efforts to communicate and practice its service mission to the community in a proactive and meaningful way.

Conclusion

Universities operate in an increasingly changing world where existing knowledge suffers from obsolescence faster than ever before. It has been suggested by some writers that world knowledge is actually doubling every ten years! Thus there needs to be an institution-wide system for every university to insure the timely development of new knowledge through effective research activity and modern methods of imparting this knowledge through teaching. AICU, with its long tradition as one of the pre-eminent universities in Romania, seeks to lead change and to insure the continued development of quality and innovation, which has already been demonstrated in various areas of its current operations. The Visiting Advisors would like to encourage those who are committing themselves to the well being of the university not to wane in their efforts to develop the full potential of AICU. In our view, there should be two guiding principles for this development— openness and flexibility. The quest for openness should be the basis for the introduction of a more student-oriented approach toward teaching and learning and for intensified endeavors to reach out to the broader community in and around Iasi. Flexibility is the key word that should characterize AICU's willingness to adopt a more problem-oriented approach to knowledge production, which is not confined to the boundaries of academic disciplines. Flexibility is also needed to make the university more responsive to public needs. It is our sincere hope that the changes in the organizational structure of AICU suggested in this report will prove to be helpful in furthering the discussions concerning the future of AICU.

Visiting Advisors Team

Laszlo Frenyo Hungary

Laszlo Frenyo is president of the Hungarian Higher Education and Research Council, as well as a member of the Advisory Committee for Modification of the Higher Education Law. Dr. Frenyo was the president of the Hungarian Rectors Conference from 1995 to 1997, and served as chairman of its International Committee from 1991 to 1995. He has also served as the rector of the University of Veterinary Science in Budapest, the same institution from which he earned his D.V.M. and Ph.D. degrees. Dr. Frenyo is a member of the Universities Project Advisory Committee.

Jochen Fried Germany

Jochen Fried is director of the Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar. Prior to joining the Salzburg Seminar in 1998, he worked as the head of programs at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, and as a senior officer in the secretariat of the German Science Council in Cologne. After receiving his doctorate in German literature from Düsseldorf University in 1984, he was lecturer at Cambridge University and at the University of Ljubljana under the auspices of the German Academic Exchange Service. Dr. Fried serves as an expert for the Austrian Federal Ministry for Science and Transport, and is a member of the Editorial Board for the UNESCO-CEPES quarterly review "Higher Education in Europe."

Guy Haug France

Guy Haug is delegate-at-large of the Association of European Universities (CRE) in Geneva. He was instrumental in the preparation of the 1999 Bologna Declaration in which 29 European countries pledged to reform their educational systems in a convergent way in order to make European higher education more compatible and more competitive worldwide. Dr. Haug was vice president and director general of the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) for Europe until 1998. He worked for the European Union for the preparation and inception of the ERASMUS and TEMPUS programmes. He cooperates regularly with the Council of Europe, the OECD, UNESCO and with NGOs involved in international education. Guy Haug holds a master's degree in law from Strasbourg, an MBA from Ottawa and earned a Ph.D. in political science at the University of Tübingen.

Edward Jakubauskas USA

Edward Jakubauskas is a senior economist at the University of Colorado at Denver's Center for International Business and Economics Studies. He is the former president of Central Michigan University (1988-1992) and the State University of New York at Geneseo (1979-1988). Dr. Jakubauskas has worked with the U.S. Baltic Foundation in Vilnius and with Vilnius University in further developing its financial administration. As the president of Central Michigan University, he administered a 16,000-student campus with an operating budget of $145 million. Dr. Jakubauskas was chosen in 1980 as one of thirteen U.S. college presidents to make up a delegation to Poland and later chaired a similar 15-member delegation to the Soviet Union in 1988. He earned his M.A. in economics from the University of Wisconsin in 1954 and his Ph.D. in economics from the University of Connecticut in 1961.

Marcellette Williams USA

Marcellette Williams is deputy chancellor and professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Before joining the University of Massachusetts in January 1994, Dr. Williams served as executive assistant to the president and corporate secretary of the board of trustees, as project coordinator for internal institutional advancement in the office of the provost; as associate chairperson in the department of English; as associate director of the English Language Center and as an associate professor of English at Michigan State University. She consulted for nearly ten years throughout Asia and in Europe through MSU's Graduate Studies in Education Overseas program. She has held major offices in professional associations at the state and national level. Currently Dr. Williams' research focuses on the language of leadership—its metaphors and other dimensions of rhetoric and its capacity to persuade, motivate and renew. Dr. Williams earned her Ph.D. in English at Michigan State University.

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

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.

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, thirteen VAP visits will have taken place, nine to universities in East and Central Europe, and four to Russian universities. A full schedule of visits is planned for 2000. The addition of the Visiting Advisors Program brings to the Universities Project an applied aspect and serves to enhance institutional and personal relationships begun in Salzburg.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

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