

THE UNIVERSITIES PROJECT OF THE SALZBURG SEMINAR
VISITING ADVISORS REPORT

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF LIBEREC
LIBEREC, CZECH REPUBLIC

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Team Members

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I. Introduction

The Rector and academic staff provided the opportunity for the Visiting Advisors (VA) to have in-depth discussions about the Technical University of Liberec (TUL). Given the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the respective faculties, it was crucial to meet with the Deans and some of their colleagues as well as with the Rector and Vice Rectors. The Rector had anticipated our needs in this regard and had arranged an intensive schedule accordingly.

The Rector and colleagues are committed to the goal of raising TUL to the highest level in the university family of Europe. The progress that has been made since 1989 is notable. Community support has been manifested by the gifts of two major buildings, one of which had housed the training school for Marxism. A land reserve policy has been forged with the City that assures more coherent campus development. Centers of Excellence furthering cooperation with local industries have been established and additional ones are being planned. The establishment in 1990 of the Faculty of Education was imperative; its logical development is anticipated. The voluntary subjection to this external assessment is laudable and reflects the determination of TUL to excel. In the exit review the Rector insisted upon candor and it is in this spirit that this report has been prepared.

II. Mission of the Visiting Advisors

In his invitation the Rector expressed the desire for the assessment of three areas:

- administration and finance
- academic structure and governance
- technology

The team proceeded accordingly but it was necessary to exceed these boundaries in a limited way in order to gain a better understanding of certain subjects. There were no inhibitions or objections on the part of any participants to broaden an agenda of the moment when it was pertinent. The Rector and his colleagues promptly provided additional documents and /or personnel as needed.

III. University Administration and Finance

Since budget allocations to all Czech universities are made by the Ministry of Education in Prague, the VA pursued mechanisms for supplementation. The enrollment-driven nature of the budget influences various policies and programs, particularly the baccalaureate degree that is discussed below under academic structure and governance.

The Rector presented the year 2000 budget proposal together with budget details for 1997, 1998, and 1999. The team concluded that the budget was far from sufficient. Of particular concern was the unusually low level of faculty salaries. There was also concern about inadequate funding for teaching and research equipment, research support, and faculty travel to professional meetings.

Nation-wide faculty salaries are so low that university teaching is no longer considered prestigious and universities have lost to industry (as well as to western universities) far too many of its best intellectuals and scholars. The team is concerned that if this "brain drain" in the Czech Republic continues, universities, which are the engines of economic development, will be marginalized and, as a consequence, overall economic growth and social development will be compromised. Government investment in faculty is an investment in national prosperity.

Government investment in faculty research and development is also important. Almost as important to faculty as making a living wage is their ability to be involved in scholarship. Lack of adequate support for scholarship is currently as damaging to the professoriate as lack of appropriate compensation. In terms of wages TUL is not attractive for young researchers in the face of an aging academic population. As a result, the higher education teaching profession is facing a nation-wide crisis in the Czech Republic.

The systematic development of research cooperation with the private sector should be extended beyond the planned Centers of Excellence, which the team members think have considerable potential. TUL could focus on the vision and

mission of being a "Research University" through (a) enhanced cooperation with existing firms in the area and (b) stimulation and support of spin-offs. (See Article 1e of the 1998 Higher Education Act). Income from private sector research projects might supplement the existing budget up to 30%. TUL could demonstrate its research potential by increased marketing and knowledge transfer activities. The university is currently involved in important research projects including work on hydrogen energy and speech recognition that deserve more public attention.

The VA understand that only the Ministry can modify existing budget policies. It would be in the best interest of all universities to be able to provide research incentives. By adjusting the budget sharing rule, research activities which are externally funded could and should be rewarded by a higher share of the regular budget. Other rewards could be a reduction in teaching load and/or the granting of sabbatical leaves.

The establishment of a business incubator in or close to the university would benefit both the faculty and the private sector.

If the vision and mission of TUL as a research university is in the heads of the various legal bodies, then they will collectively support this vision, and decision-making processes will become easier. The university will become a decisive factor in the economic development of the area (HEA 1998, Article 1e). The financial means of the university will increase, allowing higher compensation and replacement of equipment. Young researchers will be more attracted because of higher wages and a stimulating research climate.

An innovative approach in place in some universities is worthy of consideration. It could be meaningful to set up "contracts" between the Ministry and TUL and between TUL and the Faculties, which define certain goals, and which are limited to certain rewards.

IV. Fundraising and Alumni (graduates)

The VA spent much time discussing other alternative sources of income for the university since government support is tied to student numbers and the university does not plan to expand significantly. A lesson could be learned from British universities which actively engaged in fundraising when the Thatcher government cut funding in the 1970s and 1980s. As a consequence, many British universities, Oxford and Cambridge most prominently, have amassed large endowments, making them more independent of government support. TUL has the same potential, not only from alumni who have gone on to become wealthy business people, but also from corporations and businesses who employ graduates and benefit from university research. The team believes that by hiring one or two individuals who could not only coordinate alumni involvement in the university but also assist faculty in the submission of research proposals to foundations, government, and industry, TUL would more than reimburse itself for the expense.

Alumni can play an additional role. Many of them hold important positions in industry and the professions. If properly coordinated, they can provide employment for graduating TUL students.

The university could initiate these efforts in several ways:

- A newsletter could be produced and sent to all graduates at least twice a year. It could update them on news of the university and especially the faculties from which they graduated.

- The university could sponsor once every year a reunion when alumni would be invited back to the university to renew old friendships, visit their faculties, hear from the Rector and engage in a social function such as a ball or a dinner. Graduates would be expected to pay for dinners. The reunion should not be an expense to the university.

- Each year via a letter from the Rector, alumni could be asked to make a contribution towards an important project the university is trying to fund, such as the purchase of a property, the renovation of a building, etc. Such a letter can raise significant amounts of money. For example, if the university has 10,000 living graduates and half made an annual gift of 340 K, 1,700,000 K would be raised in this way.

The team understands that fundraising and alumni organization is not common for many European universities. However, it was believed that the team would be negligent if it did not pose the subject since both activities are essential to the success of most universities in North America. Increasingly more European universities have started developing this potential source of additional revenue. Hence, TUL has the opportunity to become one of the first Czech universities with a working alumni organization.

V. Academic Structure and Governance

The VA are cognizant of the fact that until recently TUL was expected to graduate students trained to serve regional industries. This involved a narrow curriculum. Governance until 1989 conformed politically to the reality of the period. The past ten years have witnessed major changes in academic structure and governance; both are in an evolving state. The team is more sanguine about its efforts of assessment in the area of academic structure than of governance.

1. Academic Structure

The Deans of the six faculties made presentations of their respective programs and enthusiastically engaged the team in fruitful discussions. Visits were made to the facilities of most of them. Admission policy, curriculum, student mobility between faculties, student attrition, faculty recruitment, and teaching loads were discussed in depth.

A. The Liberal Arts

In a rapidly changing world, it is imperative that students preparing for the professions or for technological occupations, receive as broad an education as possible. Engineers, architects, business people, technicians must understand how their discipline relates to the wider world around them. They must also be able to communicate verbally and in written form. The team was especially impressed with the way the Faculty of Architecture has been able to incorporate the humanities into the training of architects. The team believes that students from the other faculties might also benefit from an exposure to the arts and sciences. It might be helpful to remember that it was a Czech national hero, John Amos Comenius, the founder of modern education, who introduced the concept of "liberal studies" to the world and that virtually all U.S. and Canadian engineering and technology universities, following Comenius' example, require a measure of the liberal arts and sciences for their students.

In this context, it also appeared to some of the VA that the Faculty of Education is really becoming a "faculty of arts and sciences" with the potential of providing the rest of the university with more of a liberal studies presence. Indeed if, over time, this faculty comes to resemble the arts and sciences faculties of the modern European and American universities, TUL could readily evolve into a more comprehensive university thus enjoying the international stature and prestige of other comprehensive universities around the world. This might not be possible immediately because of government regulation; still, a broader liberal arts and sciences curriculum for all first year students, similar to what has been done in the Faculty of Architecture, will be more commensurate with modern technological universities in the West.

A conspicuous void exists in the structure of the Faculty of Education. The Dean stated that a division of biology had been proposed for the coming year but it was eliminated because of the unavailability of funding. It will be impossible to initiate the important field of biotechnology until this concentration is introduced. This should be considered a matter of great urgency.

B. Curricular Flexibility

The team noticed a relatively high attrition rate and was told that among the causes was inadequate secondary school preparation. However, attrition can also be fueled by the fact that once a student has committed to a particular faculty, it is almost impossible to change his/her mind, even in the first year. Anything that can be done to ease credit transfer between faculties, especially during the first year of a student's residency, will keep some of the better students at the university.

C. New Baccalaureate Program

The team could not gain a clear understanding of the new degree of “bakalár” translated “Bachelor.” According to the HEA of 1998 the degree has the same meaning as in the 1990 HEA. In the view of the VA, the limited use made of it at TUL causes considerable concern. If the degree continues to be used to train students for subordinate positions such as shop managers, the team believes that this kind of program would be more appropriate for a vocational school, not a major research university. The team is particularly concerned if the creation of such a program creates an additional burden on the already limited financial and personnel resources of the university. The extremely high teaching load of young research assistants as a consequence is a matter that needs correction. It is hoped that the bachelor degree will become the capstone of the undergraduate experience.

The “magister” or master's degree should follow requirements appropriate to the discipline. Doctoral degrees are defined in the HEA of 1998. It is recommended that TUL follow the current practices in the majority of European universities with regard to doctoral degrees.

2. Governance

A. The Board of Trustees

The visiting team was intrigued with the newly created Board of Trustees. These boards currently have limited powers and responsibilities; however, they can become, like a board of trustees in America, powerful agents of change within the university if they are given the appropriate authority. Universities like TUL need boards made up of people who are committed to the success of the institution. Enough members should come from outside the local community to provide dispassionate and critical advice. Otherwise parochialism might constrain and confine the institution. Whether or not these boards can develop into governing agencies that share power with the Rector and the faculty senate remains to be seen.

B. The Rector and The Academic Senate

The VA hope that the delineation of responsibilities between the Senate and the Rector will be clarified as soon as possible. In one meeting a Dean stated that "the success of our university depends upon the leadership of the Rector in spite of new laws." In another meeting the Rector said that "the responsibility for building departments and schools should lie with Deans and faculty; the Rector only facilitates." Both statements are admirable. Soon after the team's visit, Dr. Lukás was re-elected by the Academic Senate as Rector for a second three year term which will be his last under current law. It should be noted that the Rector's powers are very limited. Academic senates rightfully resumed their role as significant participants in university governance following the events of late 1989 and codified in the HEA of 1990. The Board of Trustees could become part of a system of checks and balances in governance in the future.

It is the judgment of the VA that TUL would move forward more quickly if the laws governing universities allowed the Rector's role to be stronger. The VA observed that currently there is a healthy relationship between the Rector and the Senate based on mutual respect. This bodes well for the immediate future.

The visiting team has carried home one of the best examples of democracy in action in our respective experiences. This was the public discussion between the two candidates for Rector. It is to the credit of both that we were invited. Civility was the hallmark of the occasion.

VI. Distance Learning and Technology

The VA made a brief visit to the distance learning and technology facilities the first day and were impressed with the initial efforts of TUL. Two members of the team spent most of the second day examining the program in depth.

A. Distance Learning

1. Issues to Applaud:

The Director is providing excellent leadership. She seems to have established firm links with people and programs in open and distance learning in other European countries. She is part of the Phare project that has provided her with good information and an opportunity to learn quickly.

The enrollment of 600 is notable, given the resources.

There is a need among teachers for lifelong learning opportunities in special education.

The Director has a good sense of the training needs of faculty and she is making excellent efforts to supply these. Not only is she clearly capable of differentiating between the content knowledge and the ability to teach at a distance, she is also able to help those who have not worked at a distance and has designed training for them.

2. Issues Needing Improvement:

The staffing is extremely thin. Greater training for staff is needed so that people can respond more quickly. The Distance Learning staff currently has two people who are part of community service (in lieu of military service) and there is no guarantee that when these two people leave, there will be anyone to replace them.

It takes too much time to accomplish all tasks, so that the staff are less able to respond creatively to requests. (A corporation requested some courses, but it currently takes two years to complete a study guide and have it approved).

The Director indicated that she needs training in financial management. She is unclear about how to design a budget. This deficiency precludes her from being a partner with other institutions in joint grant proposals.

Grant writing skills should be developed by the Director; there is a lack of knowledge in this area which hinders efforts to attract outside funding.

Distance learning at TUL would benefit from the development of a strategic plan which includes institutional goals, academic objectives and research emphases. Because funding must come from outside the state funds provided to TUL, there is significant need to be able to plan and to have some idea about how this will move forward. Presently, the planning is done for the next year, primarily including the finding of faculty and the review and formatting of study guides. A greater and more inclusive effort at strategically supporting distance learning is needed. Some issues which might be considered in a strategic plan include:

- Earning academic degrees on the web.
- Identification of particular student markets or third party groups who need continual updating.
- Certificates for lifelong learning for specific groups of students such as those for business or updates on new techniques in textile design.
- Development of core faculty and training of these people.
- Staff development.
- Web-based distance education or lifelong learning which is targeted to those student groups with known web access.

B. Technology

1. Issues to Applaud:

TUL has made good efforts to ensure that students and faculty have some hardware and appropriate software for use in research and learning.

Based on a study conducted last year, many of the engineering students and others engaged in MIS have access to technology. .

For several departments, there appears to be good integration for technology, research, and learning. Students are involved in technologically supported research.

There is a good beginning with the use of technology in the library. The catalog is on-line and accessible to students in laboratories, in dormitories, and from their own computers, if they have them.

2. Issues Needing Improvement:

There needs to be a centralized network manager who has some responsibility for the system as a whole. As the faculties expand their use in both research and teaching, there will be many more chances for problems and an increasing need for integration.

There needs to be a student training and help function which is centralized, so that students are well served, even if a particular faculty does not choose to provide student assistance with hardware and software issues.

The library might be a possible source of baseline training in searching techniques and other web based information management. A growing number of universities are using their library as the information management center for their university, so that there is baseline learning for future jobs and students are able to evaluate clearly the information which is obtained on the web. In the paper-based collection, the librarian serves a screening function for the collection; such a screening function for the web takes the form of providing assistance in the identification of criteria for evaluation of web based information.

TUL might want to develop specific learning reserves which are web-based and particularly useful to specific faculties. For example for students in textile design or engineering, a library of pictures in architecture which could be used by all students at all levels or sites in other universities would be particularly helpful to keep students current in their knowledge.

VII. Summary and Conclusions

The Technical University of Liberec has made significant strides during a period of profound national adjustment.

- Advantage should be taken of the freedom of initiative contained in the HEA of 1998. Low academic salaries pose a threat to the nation's most valuable resource, the intellectual reservoir. Fortunately this is a renewable resource but it is dependent upon the retention of the best minds. It is urged that the suggested methods for budget supplementation be implemented in order to attract and retain young scholars.
- Serious consideration should be given to forming an alumni support group.
- The Faculty of Education should become a Faculty of Arts and Sciences. This would be the first step toward becoming a major comprehensive research university.
- The interfaculty credit transfer policy should be liberalized to avoid the high attrition rate which is wasteful of money and faculty time.

TUL is praised for initiating distance learning which needs nurturing if it is to survive. A good start has been made in technology utilization. Suggestions for the coordination of this effort should be given serious consideration.
Steps can be taken toward becoming a leading university. The most important factor will be the will to do so.

Visiting Advisors Team

John Belew USA

John Belew is professor and provost emeritus of Baylor University, Waco, Texas. While at Baylor, he served as Jo Murphy Chair of International Education, chief academic officer, and dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Before joining Baylor University in 1956, Dr. Belew held teaching and research positions at Brown University and the University of Virginia. Dr. Belew's research papers have appeared in publications of the American Chemical Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry. He conducted exchange agreement negotiations with universities in many countries, including Argentina, Azerbaijan, China, Columbia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Slovakia, and South Africa. He has given lectures on higher education in Japan, Hong Kong and Shanghai. Dr. Belew received his B.S. in chemistry from Baylor University, his M.S. from Wichita State, and his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin.

Carolyn Jarmon USA

Dr. Jarmon is currently Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs at SUNY Empire State College, Saratoga Springs, New York. She has been coordinator of SUNY by Satellite, a statewide program for adults seeking an undergraduate degree in business of community college campuses, and has worked extensively in the field of distance education. She is currently working with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a major publisher to develop a collaborative model for the design of quality learning environments using information technology. Since 1996 she has been visiting Fellow at Educom, a non-profit consortium of colleges working to reform higher education through the application of information technology. Dr. Jarmon holds an M.S. and a Ph.D. from Cornell University, and an M.B.A. from East Tennessee State University.

Roger Martin USA

Roger Martin is president and professor of history at Randolph-Macon College, Ashland, Virginia. Before joining Randolph-Macon College in 1997, he was for eleven years president of Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. From 1980-1986, he was the associate dean of the Divinity School of Administration and Planning and a lecturer on church history at Harvard University. Between 1976 and 1980 he was executive assistant to the president and assistant professor of history at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. A member of several professional organizations including the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, Dr. Martin is the author of numerous books and scholarly articles focusing on the history of religion. He received his B.A. from Drew University, a B.D. and S.T.M. from Yale University, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Oxford University.

Hans Wiesmeth Germany
Hans Wiesmeth has served as the vice-rector for science since 1993, and the director of the European Institute for Traffic Engineering since 1994 at the Dresden Technical University. Dr. Wiesmeth was an associate professor of economics at the University of Bonn from 1981 to1988 and is currently a full professor of economics at the University of Dresden. He has held visiting positions at several institutions including the University of Haifa in Israel, York University in Ontario, Canada, and the University of Aix-Marseille in France. He has published extensively on the topics of theoretical economics, concentrating on microeconomics and general equilibrium theory. Dr. Wiesmeth received his degree in mathematics from the University of Erlangen-Nuremburg and his Ph.D. from the University of Hamburg.

Marty Gecek USA
Marty Gecek is the administrative director of the Salzburg Seminar's American Studies Center, in addition to serving as coordinator for the Universities Project Visiting Advisors Program. A member of the Salzburg Seminar staff since 1966, she has held several positions including associate director for administration and personnel. Originally from Massachusetts, she earned a B.A. in sociology from Hollins University, Virginia, and has lived in Salzburg since graduation from college.

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.

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, 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.

The Salzburg Seminar acknowledges with gratitude the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Transport, which generously fund the Universities Project.

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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