

The Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar
Visiting Advisors Program

Report of the Visit to St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University (LETI) Russian Federation May 3-8, 2003

Team Members:

C. Peter Magrath (Team leader), President, National Association of State University and Land-Grant Colleges, Washington DC, USA
Shirley Chater, Senior Consultant, Academic Search Consultation Service, Washington, DC, USA
Jiri Zlatuska, Rector, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic
Helene Kamensky, Director, Russian Higher Education Programs, Salzburg Seminar, Austria

From May 3 to May 7, a Team from the Salzburg Seminar Visiting Advisors Program (VAP) went to St. Petersburg Electrotechnical University (hereafter referred to as LETI) at the invitation of Rector Dmitry V. Puzankov. We went to offer our impressions and recommendations in response to the self-assessment report and the Strategic Plan that the University prepared as the LETI leadership looks toward the future. The Team consisted of: Dr. Shirley Chater, a professor at the University of California, San Francisco and former President of Texas Women's University; Dr. Jiri Zlatuska, Rector of Masaryk University in the Czech Republic; Dr. Helene Kamensky, a staff member of the Salzburg Seminar and director of its higher education programs in Russia; and Dr. C. Peter Magrath, President of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges and former President of three American universities, who chaired the Team.

We were graciously and warmly received by the Rector and his staff. Within the time constraints of a short visit, we met with and engaged in probing discussions with University academic leaders, professors, and with students. We are pleased to note that our conversations with the various individuals from LETI were open and candid, and we appreciated the opportunity to experience a bit of the rich cultural heritage and history of St. Petersburg, currently celebrating its 300th anniversary.

Introductory Comments

Situated in St. Petersburg, LETI is one of forty public or state universities in that region. Primarily, though not exclusively, an engineering and technical university, it enrolls 10,000 students and has a faculty of 1000. Its history, which goes back to 1886, includes the legacy of one of the world's great radio engineers and inventors, Professor Alexander Popov; and it enjoys a reputation as one of the premier

research universities in engineering and technical fields in the Russian Federation. Today, one of its departments is chaired by a Nobel Prize Laureate in Physics, Professor Zhores Alferov.

Not surprisingly, and in common with all universities in Russia, LETI struggles with severe budget problems, receiving only about 40 percent of its operating budget from the central government, the Russian Ministry of Education. Through its research programs it also attracts grants and support from the Ministry of Science and obtains some support from research institutes that are part of the central or federal government. LETI compensates in a significant way for inadequate state support by admitting a large number of so-called "commercial" (or tuition paying) students in addition to the so-called "free" or state-subsidized students, which generate formula funds for the University. While the commercial students are an economic necessity for LETI, their academic qualifications are inferior to those of the subsidized students who are admitted on a competitive basis. This circumstance, as we comment below, poses some challenges for LETI, especially because it is a university with a reputation for high academic quality. Its quality as a research and teaching university is one of its strengths, along with the fact that LETI has developed a considerable number of ties with industrial and technical firms, both Russian and international.

Because of the serious budget problems, faculty salaries are low (typical in Russia), and the University faces a possible enrollment decline in the years ahead due to demographic changes. It is working also to adapt its credit system to a multi-level or dual credit system that appears to be emerging in Russia and is being implemented in educational institutions throughout Europe as part of the Bologna Process. This Process is leading to a rationalization and coordination of university education throughout Europe and is likely to have an enormous impact on Russian higher education.

As a consequence of these circumstances and the changes occurring in higher education throughout the world, the Rector has promoted a self-assessment project and a strategic plan. As an innovative academic leader, he clearly has the vision that change is essential for the future development and improvement of LETI. Not surprisingly, there is inbred resistance within the Faculties and programs of the University; change is always unsettling and breeds fear and insecurity, stimulating subtle resistance to desirable reforms. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the Rector and a number of his senior associates are committed in visionary but pragmatic ways of fostering change and reform in key areas.

Our report clearly cannot cover all of the many challenges facing LETI, and we therefore focus on three key and interrelated areas: the quality of education at LETI; the research operations of the University; and issues of finances and management. Before turning to some observations and recommendations in these three general categories, we offer five points as our major suggestions or recommendations:

General Recommendations

(1) We commend the beginning of a Strategic Planning Process at LETI, but suggest that the self-assessment document, while it provided us with some interesting information, needs to be done in a new way. As we understand, the document is the product of one individual and not of a team process involving all vice rectors. As a consequence, the strategic planning document, which sets general objectives for the University, is unrelated to the self-assessment document. We strongly urge that a new self-assessment be prepared as part of a coordinated process of strategic planning focused on setting priorities. We suggest this be done by a Team of all of the senior University officials and in discussion and consultation with the University's Faculties and representative bodies within the institution, including students.

(2) We applaud the effort to establish priorities, but urge that each academic unit be asked to develop a limited number of priorities—perhaps three or four—and that these be reviewed and assessed for practicality by the Rector and his leadership Team. Similarly, we believe the overall University should establish a limited number of achievable priorities as its objectives for the years ahead.

(3) Because budget and "efficiency" in the use of scarce resources is clearly and correctly desired by the Rector, we note our judgment that LETI is over-administered. It has too many vice rectors for what is, in effect, a medium-sized university. This is inherently costly in addition to being cumbersome, since eight vice rectors inescapably present separatist views and a lack of coordination between units that should function as part of a single university. Even as we recommend a pruning of the Rectorate over time, we suggest that it would be both wise and helpful if at least one vice rector were a woman. We believe that the inclusion of women in the team would enhance the forward-looking and internationally minded objectives of the Rector.

(4) As a leading research university, LETI has much to offer to Russia in general and to the St. Petersburg area in particular, not only from its engineering and technical Faculties, but also from its emerging Economics and Management Faculty and its Humanities Faculty. We recommend that instead of the traditional notion of providing "service" to business and community groups, the University examine the model of "Engagement," in which Faculties collaborate as coequals in partnership to serve community and business needs while also fulfilling legitimate University interests and objectives.

(5) We further recommend that, recognizing this is not always easy or traditionally accepted within the traditionally conservative cultures of all universities, LETI pursue this Engagement model by seeking to collaborate on community and business interests in partnership with some of the other respected universities in St. Petersburg.

Quality of Education

The strength and national reputation of LETI derives from the high quality of its research and educational programs for students. The challenge is to maintain this quality in the face of difficult budget circumstances and therefore maintain the University's attractiveness to potential students and industrial and business enterprises. We suggest that the University work hard on continuing—and strengthening—the integration of its research work and its educational work both with the more junior students and the more advanced and professionally focused students. This University, typical of universities around the world, tends to REact to budget problems or a "crisis" (in fact, on a number of occasions, we heard reference to the planning documents as an "anti-crisis" approach). We encourage, instead, a PROactive and creative, innovative planning process focused on the quality of research and educational programs that should be melded together as much as possible.

The University's initiatives and entrepreneurship, including commercial students and various contractual arrangements with businesses and industries provide some flexible resources for the institution. We therefore suggest that in the construction of Faculty and University budgets—the place where the "real" plan of a university is manifest—as many resources as possible should be allocated to the improvement of the educational programs. These should particularly include maximum access to computers for students, opportunities to use the Internet for educational purposes, the acquisition of research equipment, and the restoration of the physical site both in terms of its safety and attractiveness. An attractive and functionally safe physical facility enhances educational quality and can be a powerful vehicle for attracting students to a university that has an appealing environment. We understand and support the Rector's plans to allocate considerable resources to this issue, which we refer to as "deferred maintenance;" this is a most important initiative.

We also well understand the problem of low salaries and how over time this can create a situation where the University cannot attract the best and brightest younger professors. We suggest an intensification of the entrepreneurial approaches that are being tested to address this problem. We suggest that, to the extent possible, arrangements be made with businesses and industries with which LETI has contacts and contracts that might, for instance, provide for faculty having joint appointments, with the industry and the University sharing the salary expenses in ways that help LETI become one of the most attractive universities in Russia for younger and outstanding professors. Furthermore, the attractiveness of LETI to prospective students could be enhanced by following a practice that has been extraordinarily successful in many American universities: unpaid academic appointments given to highly qualified individuals. They could receive faculty rank at LETI and provide some teaching on an occasional or part-time basis. Such arrangements might also include the identification of courtesy or adjunct faculty, sponsored by a particular company or industry; in our experience these adjunct or courtesy appointments can be prestigious and a good advertisement for the company while bringing a talented resource at no cost to the university.

We also suggest an intensification of the process in which industries and companies are asked to donate equipment for the use of students. These ties enable students to

use laboratories in private sector companies with which the University has working relationships—something particularly important for doctoral students. And, again, to the maximum extent possible, we suggest the use of contract money, which is relatively flexible and typically includes overhead or "indirect" money, to be used for the purpose of meeting priority objectives—which of course should be selected and limited in number.

These kinds of initiatives might also include the establishment of advisory committees linked to the various Faculties and centers for the benefit of generating understanding about the University's needs. Advice from community business leaders also helps the University keep its curricula relevant to changing needs in the business world. And working ties of this kind may attract additional contracts and financial support. We recognize that the tradition of philanthropic giving and alumni support is not yet well developed in Russian higher education, but it is never to late to begin. And we further suggest that the University consider a project for the cultivation of alumni and external support beyond its current activities.

Because educational quality is paramount for LETI, we believe that the evaluation of its programs, as part of a continuous planning process, should move away from the current practice of evaluating its programs and their relevance only every ten years. In a world where technical, engineering, scientific, as well as social science and humanities education faces changing circumstances and needs, a more current approach is in order. Programs, we believe, should be evaluated for their relevance perhaps no less than every three years. This will keep the University and its academic programs current and especially useful for its students, and will please the external constituencies that it serves, including the industries and companies with which it has special relationships.

Finally, under the heading of educational quality, we understand, as the University leadership certainly understands, the dilemmas involved in having students who are subsidized because of their high quality in academic competition and are admitted as "free," versus those that are admitted on a contract or commercial basis. We have no easy answer for this dilemma. We fully appreciate the University's urgent need for resources, but we propose that the University leadership work to avoid an invidious two-tier system between these two categories of students. We hope that it can creatively consider ways in which it might seek to attract commercial or tuition paying students of the highest possible quality by marketing itself as the unique engineering and technical university in Russia that emphasizes quality and wants only the best possible students—recognizing that many students who do not pass the strict competitive exams might nevertheless be of high motivation and good, if not always superior, quality. Put another way, we suggest that the University seek to strike a balance between the issue of the "free" and "commercial" students by emphasizing itself as a University both historically and in the future committed to quality education in every respect.

In closing this section, we note that the necessarily small sample of students with whom we met, almost totally from the Economics and Management and Humanities programs, despite criticisms and concerns, spoke most positively of the University and their experiences within it. Yes, they had criticisms and suggestions, but the ones we met with spoke spontaneously and emphatically about their pleasure at

being students at LETI. (As an appendix to this report, we submit some of the major comments from that discussion. We include these because we believe that they are worth examining and being taken into account as the University continues its processes of self-evaluation and planning.) We also suggest that the University continue to market itself to international students, both because LETI is a university with international stature and because it aspires to being part of the community of forward looking international universities, not only in Europe and North America, but in Southeast Asia. Its location in St. Petersburg and its strength in a variety of important specialty areas, as well as the exciting emergence of the Economics and Management school, offer possibilities that would be good for the University and its Russian students.

The Research Agenda

The research agenda is clearly critical to LETI because of its core strength as a research university of high quality dedicated to providing a good educational experience for its students. Much of what we have to say about the research function has already been covered in our strong suggestion that research and education be integrated to the maximum extent possible. Research should nourish learning for students so that they can learn to participate as researchers and critical thinkers themselves. We applaud the development of the research centers about which we were briefed by some obviously dedicated leaders, such as the Center of Microelectronics, the Motorola Laboratory, and the Infenion Laboratory. We hope that the linkages with centers and laboratories, particularly those within the Russian Federation, might generate support from those industries to work for federal government programs of infrastructure support for needed equipment.

Moreover, and consistent with our insistence that the University work to establish a few carefully identified priorities, we suggest that it work off its established strengths in research to focus on only a limited number of research centers as opposed to spreading itself too thin, thereby weakening the quality of its research and educational products.

Finances and Management

The budget and financial challenges facing LETI are well understood by the Rector and his senior colleagues, and we have already commented on them. But we wish to reemphasize in the strongest possible language our concern for setting priorities and the development of “efficiency” in the use of scarce resources. This includes our belief that there are too many vice rectors who, while working hard, do so in an uncoordinated fashion, and that there is too much administrative overhead. We are also somewhat troubled by the external university centers, one located in eastern Russia and one in Southeast Asia. We understand that they are intended to be vehicles for the attraction of students to LETI, and, while we fully support that objective, we question the priority of off-site programs given the challenges on the main campus in St. Petersburg. Our view would be that perhaps the further development of centers and off-site locations makes more practical sense in the St. Petersburg area and its immediate region.

We also wish to reemphasize our suggestion that the "Engagement" model might induce the Rector and the University leadership Team to consider some bold initiatives to develop collaboration with two or three other higher education institutions in the St. Petersburg area. This might maximize the strength of universities, all whom have budgetary problems, and be attractive to the political and industrial and business interests in the St. Petersburg region. In any event, we strongly reemphasize our commitment to a proactive approach to planning in view of the disorganized and often confusing labor market in the Russian Federation as it undergoes economic and demographic changes. A proactive approach to the objectives and priorities of LETI, within a strong conceptual framework, may be a better vehicle to obtain signals about market needs than simply reacting to currently perceived labor market needs.

The Strategic Plan speaks of distance education, which is here to stay in higher education; it can be a useful vehicle for a university to promote its educational interests and objectives. But, just as with the research centers and our suggestion that they be closely linked to the teaching function, we believe that the Strategic Plan should give careful attention to the costs of developing high quality distance education—because it is not an inexpensive venture. Certainly LETI, with its strong technical skills and resources, is well qualified to participate in distance education, but our experience is that it is not a panacea to existing problems and must be approached on a cost conscious basis linked to core university priorities and objectives.

A Concluding Comment

In conclusion, even as we make the above strong suggestions, we wish to emphasize again our commendation for the initiative the Rector has undertaken in raising the question of self-assessment, strategic planning, and setting priorities. The best course of action for any sensible university, and certainly one that faces difficult budgetary challenges, is precisely to be optimistic and not paralyzed by financial and other difficult challenges. To the contrary, the right course is to be innovative and entrepreneurial with the conviction that a good university with a distinguished past can find ways to be a leading university both in the Russian Federation and internationally in the years ahead.

This will be the outcome if the University is focused, tries to become very important to society (but not in all the things it theoretically might), and is willing to change and move forward, as opposed to enshrining the status quo and sliding into mediocrity and backwardness. We believe that because of its history and leadership, LETI is committed to the first, and best, course of action.

Appendix: Student Comments

The VAP Team met with students on two occasions and, although a few university deans were present for the discussions, we did not sense any inhibition on the part of the students. Most of the students were from the Faculty of Management, which also includes public relations students, and from the Faculty of Humanities, with just a few from Radio Engineering. Most were female, spoke excellent English, and despite constructive criticisms and suggestions were highly positive about LETI and their studies.

We present some of their major comments as an indication of issues and views that the LETI leadership should at least consider. And we wonder whether a sampling of students more representative of the engineering and technical programs might have produced differing perspectives.

Here are the major concerns or issues we heard:

(1) Concern about costs, expressed by one student as “The government should pay for all students.” (This raises the question of the tension between “free” and “commercial” students, and the danger that the lower entrance examination scores of the “commercial” students could create an unfortunate two-class student body.)

(2) More help with finding jobs after graduation.

(3) Poor, outdated equipment from the 60’s (from technical students).

(4) Laboratory—low in quality and quantity.

(5) Lack of computer availability.

(6) Quality of the programs: Will they be recognized in other countries?

(7) Need more professors in specialties.

(8) Need more “general” content.

(9) Want more “practical skills.”

(10) No or too few opportunities to “mix and mingle” with other students. (We believe this is of an important value in the world of work.)

(11) There is some “stereotypical” thinking within the University regarding Humanities and Management students who may be perceived as being less important than technical students.

(12) Faculty: work hard, but there are too many students for the number of faculty.

(13) Language laboratory: Want less technical language and more general language help; too many students in this lab.

Visiting Advisors:

C. Peter MAGRATH, USA (TEAM LEADER)



Dr. C. Peter Magrath assumed presidency in 1991of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges (NASULGC), USA. 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. More recently, he organized the Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, a five-year project that has identified key priorities and directions for public universities in the USA. Since 2002 Dr. Magrath has been chairing a Commission on Writing on behalf of the College Board. 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; held faculty and administrative posts at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln and at Brown University; and is the author of numerous books, monographs and articles. Dr. Magrath is on the Executive Committee of the Salzburg Seminar and a member of the Universities Project Advisory Committee, a multiple-time alumnus of the Universities Project symposia and has been team leader on trips by the Visiting Advisors Program to Brno, Czech Republic in 1999 and 2001 and to Novgorod, Russian Federation in 2000.

Shirley CHATER, USA

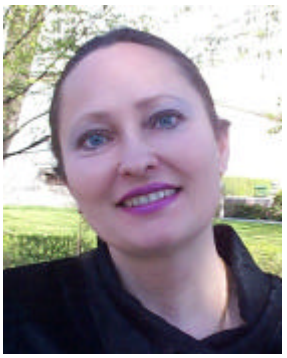


Dr. Shirley Chater is a senior consultant for the Academic Search Consultation Service, Washington, DC, USA; visiting professor at the Institute for Health and Aging at the University of California, San Francisco; and independent lecturer on leadership and education. She has previously served as commissioner for the United States Social Security Administration; advisor to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, Michigan; and is former president of the Texas Woman's University of Denton, Dallas, and Houston. Dr. Chater is a member of the National Academy of Public Administration and of the Institute of Medicine at the National Academy of Sciences. She holds an M.A. from the University of California, San Francisco and a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Chater was a Fellow at Salzburg Seminar Session 379: Alternate Systems and Structures of Higher Education: Public Needs and Institutional Response for the 21st Century in 2000.

Jiri ZLATUSKA, Czech Republic



Dr. Jiri Zlatuska is rector of Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, where he is also founding dean of the Faculty of Informatics and professor of computer science. He has been a visiting associate professor at the University of Delaware, Newark, USA, and has held various teaching and administrative posts at Masaryk University. His research interests include computer science and mathematical logic, the general impact of informatics, and information society. Professor Zlatuska holds a Ph.D. in theoretical computer science from the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, Prague. He is an alumnus of several Salzburg Seminar sessions on higher education and of Universities Project symposia. Masaryk University hosted consultant teams of the Visiting Advisors Program in 1999 and 2001.



Helene KAMENSKY, Austria

Dr. Helene Kamensky is the director of the Russian higher education programs of the Salzburg Seminar. Before joining the Salzburg Seminar, Dr. Kamensky served as an adjunct professor in philosophy and Russian studies at the Universities of Salzburg and Vienna. Previously, Dr. Kamensky was research fellow at the Institute of Scientific Theory at Salzburg International Research Center. From 1985 to 1989 she was dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University, Russian Federation. She also served that same institution as associate professor in the department of philosophy. Dr. Kamensky's area of research interest is higher education policy and management. She holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the department of logic and epistemology at the Russian Academy of Sciences, which was authenticated by the University of Salzburg, Austria in 1993.

Schedule of the Visit:

Date and time	Event	Topic	Participants	Place
May 4 Sunday 10:30 am	Meeting with rector and vice-rectors	Mission of the seminar Main problems of the university development and problems of higher education in general	Advisors and ETU rector's team	Rector's office
12:00	Sightseeing tour		Advisors Mrs.Semenova	
19:00 pm	Dinner hosted by ETU rector Prof.Dmitry Puzankov		Advisors and vice rectors	Restaurant
May 5 Monday 10:00	Seminar N 1	Distribution of the university resources	Vice-rector for development Dr.Vadim Ryabov	Conference hall Building N3
13:00	Lunch (with ETU senior administrators)			Rector's dining hall
14:00	Meeting with ETU students and professors (Faculty of Management)	Quality of higher education and its demand	Advisors FM students and professors	Faculty of Management
15:00	Summary of the 1st day		Advisors Dr.Shaposhnikov	Dr.Shaposhnikov's office
16:00-17:00	Debriefing meeting		Salzburg Seminar team	Hotel
17:00	Social program	Theatre Concert	Advisors Mrs.Semenova	
May 6 Tuesday 10:00	Seminar N 2	Development of the multi level system of engineering education	Advisors Dr.Shaposhnikov	Conference hall Building N3
13:00	Lunch		ETU representatives	Rector's dining hall
14:00	Meeting with ETU students and professors (Faculty of Humanities) (Faculty of Radio Engineering)	Quality of higher education and its demend	Dr.Shaposhnikov Dr.Azarova Prof.Lysenko	Conference hall Building N3
15:00	Summary of the 2st day		Advisors Dr.Shaposhnikov	Dr.Shaposhnikov's office
16:00-17:00	Debriefing meeting		Salzburg Seminar team	
17:00	Social program	To be agreed	Advisors Mrs.Semenova	
May,7 Wed. 10.00	Visits to the departments and laboratories		Dr.Shaposhnikov Prof.Luchinin. Prof.Kupriyanov Prof.Putov	Center of microelectronics, Motorola Laboratory, Infenion Laboratory
13:00-14:30	Lunch / Team meets to prepare preliminary report to the Rector			
14:30-16:00	Presentation of the preliminary report to the Rector and his team		Advisors Vice-rectors	Rector's office
16:00	Social program		Advisors Mrs.Semenova	
19:00	Dinner hosted by ETU rector		Advisors and Rector's team	Rector's dining hall
May 8 Thursday	**Departures**			

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 2003, more than sixty VAP visits will have taken place to universities in East and Central Europe and Russia. A full schedule of visits is planned for 2004. 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 and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which are funding the Universities Project and the Visiting Advisors Program respectively.

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.

Salzburg Seminar
Schloss Leopoldskron
Box 129
A-5010 Salzburg, Austria

Telephone: +43 662 839830
Fax: +43 662 839837

Salzburg Seminar
The Marble Works
P.O. Box 886
Middlebury, VT 05753 USA

Telephone: +1 802 388 0007
Fax: +1 802 388 1030

Salzburg Seminar website: **www.salzburgseminar.org**