

PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

9 September 2009

(week 37)

(Confirmed)

Present:

Said Irandoust

Nitin Afzulpurkar

Amrit Bart

Peter Haddawy

Barbara Igel

Weerakorn Ongsakul

Sudip Rakshit

Jayant Routray

Jonathan Shaw

Shankar Tagad

Secretariat:

Karma Rana

Namita Sravat

Apologies:

Izel Ann Dante

Ram Shrestha

Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai

PAC 09.09.01 Welcome and Apologies

The President welcomed all present to the PAC meeting, especially the invitee Dr. Amrit Bart, Director of AIT Vietnam (AIT-VN). The apologies were noted.

PAC 09.09.02 Adoption of Agenda

It was agreed to first take the issues related to the AIT-VN, and later if time permits take up rest of the agenda issues.

PAC 09.09.03 Issues and Updates from Director, AIT Vietnam

The Director of AIT-Vietnam (AIT-VN), Dr. Amrit Bart noted its seven months since he took over as Director of AIT-VN. He briefed members on the various challenges faced, including the lower student enrollment in short-training programs this year due to economic recession; increased operational cost of programs due to moving to new campus for which rentals have to be paid now and new personnel recruitments.

Dr. Bart also explained that there are many opportunities where families and companies are willing to pay for higher/quality education. Thousands of scholarships marked for study abroad in higher education and less than 5% have been utilized till now.

The key points of the issues raised by Dr. Bart and discussions that followed were:

1. *A need to have flexibility in English language requirement which is viewed as an obstacle, mainly because their objective is capacity building of their professionals.*

VPAA stated he did not have issue with courses being delivered in language other than English (AIT Charter allows for this), particularly for professional programs.

The President was of the view that certain language proficiency is important and being international institute some minimum level should be prerequisite. It was stated that the VP-AA has requested the Registry Officer to prepare the English language requirement for professional masters program.

Dr. Bart further clarified that it is possible to maintain quality (teacher, curriculum, delivery, venue etc.) without strong English capacity- particularly if they are professionals already working in their respective countries and feel that they rarely use English in their environment. He also noted that

other universities have realized this and are now offering courses in either mix of Vietnamese-English language or Vietnamese language (with some translation). This could be one of the reasons not a single person from Vietnam was admitted to EMBA program in Thailand this intake. In another words, we are loosing a very big market because we are not as flexible.

The Dean/SOM noted that due to professional programs at Vietnam, not a single student from Vietnam has enrolled in MBA program at AIT campus this year. She suggested that language component should be introduced at the master's level, and for professional program there could be flexibility. Following this suggestion, deliberation on Professional vs. Regular Program ensued. Members noted that there is a need to have more clarity with regards to professional programs citing example in SET where many of the professional masters' students opt to convert to regular masters program. It was also noted that professional masters' graduate are not eligible to enroll in doctoral program directly. This is because as Academic Senate has noted that currently there is difference on number of credits and duration (around 33 credits in one year duration for professional masters, for regular minimum 48 credits requirement is there). Thus, if a research component is added and minimum credit requirement of 48 is met, then the program is not diluted.

The President stated that the Professional Program is pedagogically different but should not be considered as an inferior program (by not allowing direct admission to the doctoral program to graduates interested), and there should be criteria such as number of years of experience and service, recommendation letters from relevant referees, project work he was involved during his/her service etc. to validate the professionals' knowledge which could be counted as equivalent to some credits.

The VP-AA mentioned that a meeting with Professional Program coordinators was held and a policy framework is being developed. Also, the Director of CLIQ, Dr. Afendras is gathering information on how to quantify and validate the work experience.

It was suggested that a comprehensive deliberation on this issue must be ensued at the Academic Senate for further clarity and recommendations.

2. Need for the harmonization of the internal agreements between the Schools at AIT and AIT-VN.

Currently there are internal agreements with SET and SOM, which were signed at different times but are similar. Dr. Bart stated that he would also soon meet the Dean/SERD to explore the activities/programs that could be offered by SERD in AIT-VN. These internal agreements will need to be harmonized for improved communication amongst all three schools and AIT-VN.

3. Need for clarification on AIT-VN overheads.

Dr. Amrit Bart circulated a memo clarifying the services which use overhead from Units/Sections and Academic Program with breakdown of services under various categories. He **requested** the School Deans to review it and send the feedback to him. It was also **agreed** that AITVN would charge overhead within one month of tuition and fees collection, unlike the current practice of waiting till the end of year. List of overhead charges, once agreed will be attached as addendum to the Internal Agreements.

4. Need to streamline communications between AIT mother campus and AIT-VN campus.

The School's staffs located at AIT-VN sometimes bypass the Director, AIT-VN and only report to him for administrative purpose. The Dean, SOM informed that she has already directed the staff at AIT-VN to directly communicate and deal with Director, AIT-VN for day-to-day matters. It was **agreed** that to be consistent with the internal agreements, the academic matters would fall in the school while administrative matters in Vietnam would be handled by AITVN in close dialogue with course coordinators.

5. Need to keep AIT-VN informed about the faculty-led projects in Vietnam.

The VPR suggested that faculty need to use the Forms A, B, C and D, especially Form A that is meant to be filled in at the initiation stage of the Project. These forms should be copied to the VPR that will help in communicating and sharing the information on projects. It was also suggest that

this is web-based so that everyone concerned could look to see if someone is already preparing a bid (proposal).

6. *Flexibility to partnering of AIT-VN with institutes other than AIT mother campus which will create income opportunities for AIT-VN also.*

As an example, it was cited that YunTec Taiwan is interested in offering joint masters degree on Finance and Banking management in AIT-VN. It was **agreed** that AIT-VN being part of AIT, competition with other universities is not encouraged. Thus, AIT-VN should first give preference to AIT's Schools and if, for whatever reason, are not able to offer the program, then AIT-VN can offer it in partnership with other institutes; and in such cases certain amount of surcharge per student based on agreement should be levied.

7. *Dr. Bart requested for more clarity on the Strategic direction with regards to the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) concept and with regards to what will be the size of the center under that concept, when will it be done, and who will be the partners involved.*

The President stated that under the PPP concept, various AIT campuses could be set up in the region, Vietnam being one of the strongest candidates. Also Amata group that is keen to partner in this concept, already have land at a strategic location in Vietnam. Timing depends on how fast AIT can move and finalize the concept with interested parties.

With regards to AIT-VN status under the proposed Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, Dr. Bart was **requested** to arrange a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Education in Vietnam by end of October 2009 where Laureate International University can present the concept of PPP for Vietnam campus development. If Vietnam will be supportive, it will also help in approval at the Board of Trustees level.

8. *Need to pay honorarium (tax exempted as per AIT-VN charter) to the faculty teaching at AIT-VN.*

It was **agreed** that the honorarium will be paid to the faculty teaching at AIT-VN, but it will be calculated individually for each faculty after deducting the tax, and the surplus thus created would be used to lower the operational cost.

9. *Dr. Bart also informed that the ERP system is planned to be launched by October 2009, after which it will be linked with AIT mother campus ERP system for improved financial operations and control.*

10. *Need to have some kind of swap of staff members between AIT mother campus and AIT-VN campus which will bring in more international atmosphere in AIT in Vietnam.*

In this regard Dr. Igel suggested that AIT-Vietnam could explore with the donors if they would be willing to second faculty to AIT-VN.

This was the first time AIT-VN Director attended PAC meeting and was found to be useful for all PAC members since it discusses and makes decision on issues that affect not only the AIT mother campus but also AIT-Vietnam. The Institute Secretary, Mr. Karma Rana stated that he would explore with the President, if a section on 'Updates on activities of AIT-VN' could be included in the President's Weekly newsletter to keep the AIT community informed and also towards better communications. Also, a suggestion to conduct some PAC or Executive Committees meetings at AIT-VN campus shall be explored to enable the feeling of belongingness of AIT-VN employees to AIT.

The Student Union President, Mr. Tagad raised an issue of tuition fees based on number of credits which is same across the various FoS although the cost of operations of the FoS varies. The President took note of this issue and would request the FoS coordinators to reflect their operations cost. Accordingly, the differentiated salary system for faculty could then be adopted as per their respective FoS.

Due to time constraints it was **agreed to defer** the rest of the agenda items to the next PAC meeting on 23 September 2009.