

## PRESIDENT'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

03 October 2007

(week 40)

(confirmed)

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**Present:** Said Irandoust (*Chair*) Jonathan Shaw  
Izel Dante Khin Ni Ni Thein  
Peter Haddawy Vilas Wuwongse  
Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai Md. Mustafa Saroar  
Sivanappan Kumar *Secretaries:* Karma Rana  
Sudip K Rakshit Renedith Calabdan

**Apologies:** Dennes T Bergado Ram Shrestha  
Indra M Pandey Rathsayam Tiyyarathtagam

**Invited:** Patcharee Wangsakan

### PAC 07.10.01 Welcome and Apologies

The President welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies were received. Mr. Md. Mustafa Saroar, the current Student Union (SU) Vice-President, and incoming SU President was welcomed to his first PAC meeting. Both the President and Vice-President of SU are members of the PAC.

### PAC 07.10.02 Approval of the PAC Agenda and Review of the Minutes of the PAC Meeting of 05 September 2007.

The minutes of the 05 September 2007 PAC meeting were *confirmed*.

#### **Follow-up on actions to be taken:**

- ***Campus Environment & Development Committee (CEDC)***

The composition of the Campus Environment & Development Committee (CEDC) was considered and the PAC nominated faculty members with expertise in the specific fields of energy, environmental engineering, infrastructure, natural resources management, solid waste management, transportation, water and sociological field, namely:

Professor Chettiyappan Visvanathan  
Dr Nadarajah Mithulananthan  
Dr Mukand Babel  
Dr Dietrich Schmidt-Vogt  
Dr Mokbul Morshed Ahmad  
Dr Vilas Nitivattananon

Dr Jonathan Shaw, AIT Extension Director and Dr Hoang Le Tien, Head, Infrastructure Office have agreed to serve in the election committee together with the Head of Administration in administering the election of the four campus resident representatives.

- ***PAC Endorsed P&P***

The Head of Administration reported that the endorsed *P&P on Use of Computing & Network Facilities/Services* were already posted on line. Comments on the *P&P on Ethical Behavior, Grievance Process and Disciplinary Process* are being incorporated. It was reported that a web link of the full P&P on ethical behavior will be included in the new Student Handbook.

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**ISSUES FROM PRESIDENT****PAC 07.10.03 SET Retreat**

The President participated in and commended the well organized SET Retreat held on 28 September 2007. Matters of strategic importance were discussed, among these were issues on academic quality control both for programs and individuals, school performance and resource planning. The President emphasized that one way to improve the quality of education is to effectively convey to all concerned the importance of academic quality assurance by means of employing a combination of measures – one of which is the inclusion of assessment measure into the contract renewal and promotion process. Financial productivity, classroom observation, peer teaching review are important dimensions which will be included in the performance evaluation. AIT has just introduced these aspects therefore it is acknowledged that expertise and experience on implementation are yet to be developed. Given this gap in experience, these dimensions will be given lesser weight in the performance evaluation at the initial stage but will be gradually increased as AIT builds up its capacity in this area.

**PAC 07.10.04 AIT Charter**

The President reported that to date (03 October 2007), 27 out of 34 members of the Board of Trustees confirmed their support/endorsement of the new AIT Charter which will be submitted to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on 02 October 2007. Although some European member countries may not become signatories, they have affirmed their active support and partnership with AIT. A meeting with MOFA permanent Secretary has been scheduled for 11 October 2007. The AIT delegation will be led by Dr. Tej Bunnag, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

**PAC 07.10.05 Series of Gender Workshops and Participation of Faculty**

The President announced at PAC that every faculty will be required to participate in at least one of the gender workshops that will be arranged. An invitation letter will be sent from the President Office to individual faculty on this regard. The President likewise requested the School Deans to ensure and facilitate participation of the faculty. To date, only a few members of the faculty have attended the first phase of the initiative which was a series of 4 workshops during the months of September and October 2007.

**PAC 07.10.06 Seminars on Academic Leadership**

Holding workshops at AIT specifically on academic leadership, quality audit and research-based universities, as suggested by VPDR, will be further considered. Suggested participants of these workshops are the President, Vice-Presidents, Deans, Associate Deans, AoHs and FoS Coordinators.

**PAC 07.10.07 Trip to Japan, 4-9 October 2007**

The President will take part as speaker in the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology in society Forum (STS Forum) in Kyoto from 7-9 October. Prior to this, he is scheduled to deliver a lecture on 05 October, in Tokyo at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Asian Science and Technology Forum (ASTF) addressing Asian energy and environmental issues and AIT'S experiences on the role of regional cooperation. The 8<sup>th</sup> of October will be the University President's Breakfast Meeting co-hosted by the Presidents of the University of Tokyo and MIT, on which Prof. Irandoust will participate as one of the speakers.

The President also plans to meet with the Thai Ambassador to Japan during his visit to discuss issues related to Thailand-AIT-Japan academic collaboration. The trip to Japan is fully funded by the Japan Science and Technology Agency.

#### **PAC 07.10.08 Post-Doctoral Fellows at AIT**

PAC *recommended* that the P&P on Fellows of AIT be revised to incorporate the following agreements:

- 1] Waiver of the \$500/month post-doctoral fee will be granted to those invited by the Institute and to applications deemed in line with AIT's research interests.
- 2] Institute invitation to post-doc fellows should be made based upon the recommendation of the school or FoS, and not by an individual.
- 3] Incorporate the expected outcomes required from the post-doc fellow for submission upon completion of the appointment period which show significant contribution primarily to research, and also to teaching and outreach activities.

Agreed actions to be taken are the following:

- 1] Highlight periodic announcement in the AIT main page on calls for application for post-doctoral fellows at AIT.
- 2] Invite proposals in targeted thematic areas under the post-doc fellows scheme.
- 3] Request announcement of AIT's call for post-doc fellow applications by partner institutions in the region and other parts of the world.

It was suggested that calls should mention that the applicant could bring funding support from home country/institution or other sources.

### **ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **Finance and Audit**

##### **PAC 07.10.09 Progress on FY 2008 Budget Preparation**

The Head, Finance Office (H/FO) provided the update on the budget process. SET and SERD indicated to submit their budget proposal, this week (week 40). Meeting schedules of schools and units with the budget committee are being finalized.

##### **PAC 07.10.10 Payment to Laptop Subsidy**

The scheme to shoulder subsidy costs for the students personal laptop computers has been communicated by the President to the Schools in his memo dated 06 September 2007.

It was suggested that a separate line item for this expense should be created in the budget formulation of the schools for next year. (*co H/FO*)

##### **PAC 07.10.11 Fund 30 Closed Projects**

PAC *agreed* that closed projects under fund 30 will be reviewed by the schools before any write-off is made. External partners/donors involved on cases where previous projects incurred deficit at the end of the project, should be officially informed. AIT's efforts in

preventing such situations from recurring and intent to recover deficits, where possible, should be conveyed.

#### **PAC 07.10.12 Account Receivables**

As *agreed*, persons/units in charge of leading the recovery efforts of accounts receivables under specific funds are:

Fund 10 – VPAA  
 Fund 30 – VPR  
 Fund 21 – c/o concerned units

### **Academic Issues**

#### **PAC 07.10.13 English Language Support to AIT Students**

VPAA provided the update on the English language support given to AIT students and the number of students currently attending English language classes. Concerns raised by the Language Center Director in his email communication to VPAA were noted at PAC particularly the proposal to raise the charge for English classes from 40 Baht/hour/student to 75 Baht/hour/student. The important reason of the raise is that none of the testing (placement or re-test which was noted to entail huge amount of work) done or currently conducted, is covered in the current fee.

Related issues were deliberated at length by PAC members and arrived at the following conclusions:

- 1] Payments for the January 2007, summer intensive and August 2007 English services conducted by the AIT English Language Center (ELC) will be charged from the 35% allocated cost.
- 2] Conduct the winter intensive planned for December 2007 in January 2008 (before start of classes). Payment for English language support for semesters 1 and 2 (Year 1) will be borne by the respective schools for their students. Additional language support that will be needed during semesters 3&4 will be paid by the concerned students.

<i>ACTION: Students should be informed well in advance.</i>
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- 3] Students who are not able to pass the English language evaluation after Year 1, will be required to attend the long break/summer intensive English classes at cost, as a conditional requirement that must be met before registering in their year 2 regular courses. The degree of effort of the student, demonstrated by consistent attendance in the summer intensive program, will also be considered in giving the final evaluation result. The main goal is improvement of the English capability of the student before they graduate.
- 4] There should be a clear agreement between ELC and the schools on budget provision, expectations, and delivery of LC services.
- 5] English courses for professional degree programs should be customized/tailor-made to better help students in their English language needs considering that students in these programs are experienced professionals. However the President emphasized that professional programs should be understood as different from the regular programs with requirements formulated differently, but it should not be seen as easy.

ACTION: The President requested D/SET to provide input on the type of requirements needed to be in place for professional degree programs based on which final criteria could be developed. This issue will be further discussed in the next meeting.

Other discussion points:

- Explore the possibility of having a contract with the students pertaining to English language services in order to give a clear signal that AIT is serious on this issue. Inquire from other universities using this practice.
- It was suggested to reconsider the plan to charge students directly for year 2 English language services and explore the possibility of cost sharing between school and the central administration. Other factors such as background, capability of students, and budget available should be taken into account.
- Policy that gives flexibility to students with special language support needs should be in place which enables them to take certain number of required course load (e.g. during year 1).
- Outsourcing of English services.
- There are many students who were assessed and advised to go through the English language program who did not comply. It was suggested that attractiveness of programs and effectiveness of ELC may also need to be looked into in order to be able to provide necessary support to the center.

#### **PAC 07.10.14 Academic Calendar**

The Academic Calendar for 2008 was *approved* by PAC. Members agreed that PAC meetings for next year will be held during Wednesday morning, fortnightly. As announced earlier, the 2008 AIT Academic Calendar has a total of 13 official holidays in compliance with the Thai Labor Law and based on AIT revised policy on leave. Compensatory holidays have also been reduced.

### **Research Issues**

#### **PAC 07.10.15 Thematic Research Areas**

The President emphasized that the main intention of forming strong Thematic Research Areas (TRA) is to build an excellent research profile that will provide long-term sustainability and stability to AIT. As there has been no substantial development towards this end, the President announced that an incentive scheme will be introduced in the system through allocation of initial budget to proposals that will be selected. The President pointed out that the proposals should be based on need/demand; more visible research areas with critical mass and strong interdisciplinary dimensions. The incentive will be granted to the effort of inclusive group/s that will work over boundaries of schools and FoS, and not of an individual.

Other discussion points highlighted were as follows:

- 1] possible link of work on TRA to faculty contract renewal and promotion;
- 2] need for a clear definition of critical mass and provision of clear support system;
- 3] consider provision of proposal templates and good models that could be shared;
- 4] need of a research plan to clarify expectations; what AIT has and what is lacking;
- 5] scan gaps in different fields of research and explore what AIT can do to fill the gap;
- 6] need for commitment from area leaders to follow through the plans;
- 7] possibility of having fewer TRA than the current list if no interest will be generated;

The VPAA informed the meeting that formation of TRA will also be an input to the research component of the AIT proposal for the next RTG funding cycle, on which the Institute will go through a quality audit process. A task force is planned to be set-up to work on this issue.

**ACTION:** The administration will convene a meeting to invite submission of proposals that could be supported with initial funding from the central administration. The aim is to encourage faculty colleagues to discuss and work together to profile AIT's research areas.

#### **PAC 07.10.16 Research Faculty**

In order to further strengthen research at AIT, establishment of the research faculty position is being considered. PAC noted that this issue was referred to the Academic Senate in order to have a parallel discussion. The proposition provides a platform for:

- 1] senior research staff with qualifications to have a career path at AIT;
- 2] current regular faculty who decides to shift focus more on research;
- 3] suitable post-doctoral fellows to become research faculty at AIT.

It was *agreed* that the "Research Faculty (RF)" title with standard ranks/grades should be maintained in order to clearly distinguish RF from the regular faculty position. Some members opined that this scheme will increase the critical mass of research areas at AIT and will help maintain continuity in the implementation of research projects. However, RF position should not be a "back door" to become a regular AIT faculty.

#### **PAC 07.10.17 Consultancy/Project Contracts**

Many of the project contracts granted to AIT are still being sub-contracted to external consultants despite the President's call to maximize, in as much as possible, use of internal expertise. In this regard the President requests the Deans to be more stringent in approving contracts for external consultants. As a procedure, there should be an internal announcement to solicit interest from AIT experts before external consultants are contacted/considered. Provision of rationale for hiring external consultants is a current standard requirement in approving such contracts. Moreover, the President highlighted the Deans roles in terms of judging the merits of the rationale provided, based on their knowledge of the particular project.

In relation to the above issue, the VPR is working on the initiative that aims to develop a roster of expertise which will include not only existing faculty, staff and students but also former AIT faculty, alumni and other professionals who are ready to work with AIT on time based projects, under the framework provided by the AIT Consultancy Service Unit. It is hoped that through this scheme, AIT will be able to do consultancy in an open and professional manner which benefit both the Institute and internal experts involved.

### **External Relations Issues**

#### **PAC 07.10.18 Publication of Articles in the Various Media**

PAC endorsed an initiative to promote publication of articles. AIT aims to be more proactive in engaging with the media in order to inform the public of what goes on at AIT and how it contributes to higher education, applied research and sustainable development of the region, which will subsequently increase visibility of the Institute.

To facilitate preparation of articles for publication in the media, the following modalities were endorsed:

- 1] VPR's proposal: Schools will be requested to submit contributions to the News and Media Specialist (NMS) of ERCO, at the initial stage.
- 2] The NMS from time to time will send request for contributions on specialized topics which may be based on significant events in the region. Strategic decisions on which country to publish should also be considered (e.g. publication on relevant events in one of the major newspapers of various capital cities of countries in the region). He will also work not only with faculty but with staff and students on their articles through interview and other means.
- 3] ERCO could initiate and decide on a certain topic that is of relevance and interest to various stakeholders and work out with a faculty who has the expertise on the said topic in order to produce a newsworthy article.

The suggestion on ERCO providing the support in terms of information gathering possibly in collaboration with the faculty, and writing the article for publication under the name of faculty was noted and will be further deliberated. Possible link to faculty performance evaluation will be explored to spur interest of faculty colleagues to contribute.

Actions to be taken:

- 1] The President would like AIT, through the News and Media Specialist (NMS) of ERCO to scan news in major newspapers and enter the debate, where appropriate, by publishing rebuttals/complementary articles on topics that are of relevance and of concern to AIT. (c/o VPER to communicate with H/ERCO and NMS)
- 2] ERCO: to prepare an interesting communication which will be sent by the President via email to faculty, staff and students regarding this initiative. This will be highlighted in the President's next weekly letter to the community.

**PAC 07.10.19 Plone Migration**

Support and cooperation were requested from the Deans, AIT Extension Director and Office/unit heads on the migration of new web pages into the plone system (content management system) by the schools and units. Concern was expressed on some of the schools and units' slow response in migrating the web pages despite calls made by ITSU. The need to standardize online faculty profile was also raised. The content of a web page is under the control of the respective schools and units.

The meeting was informed that the News and Media Specialist will be the AIT webmaster.

**PAC 07.10.20 Promotional Activities**

PAC *recommended* that a report on outcomes of promotional trips and the follow-up actions to be taken be made as a standard requirement after completion of promotional mission. Likewise, advertisement not only in newspapers but also in appropriate websites, targeted to focus groups be considered as part of the promotion strategy.

**PAC 07.10.21 "Festival 49"**

The concept and planned activities for "Festival 49" was presented to PAC by VPDR. The series of events during 2008, a year prior to AIT's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, aims to set the mood for the golden jubilee celebrations. The "Festival 49" will be held in conjunction

with the August 2008 intake which will include welcoming of new students plus events and activities involving alumni and other external stakeholders.

The power point presentation from VPDR will be circulated to PAC members for reflection and further input.

**PAC 07.10.22 “Senior Retiree Professorship at AIT”**

The document on “Concept and Procedures of the Senior Retiree Professorship at AIT” from VPDR was received by PAC.

The initial discussion considered the possibility of AIT providing a platform wherein distinguished retired faculty and personalities (also those still engaged and associated with world renowned institutions) could be hosted at AIT.

The President requested PAC members to read and reflect upon the concept paper for the next meeting’s discussion. The issue should also be thought of in consideration of the current P&Ps and Chair Professors concept.

**Other Matters**

**PAC 07.10.23 Academic Senate Summary Report**

The summary report of the last Academic Senate meeting (based on unconfirmed minutes) held on 26 September 2007 was received by PAC members.

**PAC 07.10.24 Deferred Agenda items**

Feedback on the following agenda items was agreed to be sent by email to the PAC secretariat:

- 1] MoU and MoA Templates
- 2] Proposed AIT New Entrance / Main Gate
- 3] Registration of AIT Service Marks  
*(the document was received by PAC members at the meeting)*

**PAC 07.10.25 Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 17 October 2007. The venue will be announced in due course.