

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL ASIA

Department of Sociology

DEPARTMENTAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2011-2012

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sociology program of the American University – Central Asia has over 5 years of fruitful and engaging cooperation with the Academic Fellowship Program (AFP) of the Soros Foundation. These five years have been marked with steady transformations in the Sociology department as well as some excellent breakthroughs in the quality of teaching, curriculum development, and opportunities for continuous improvement of the qualifications of the faculty members. Despite the discontinued AFP support during 2009-2011 there have been a number of achievements at the Department of Sociology of AUCA.

With this application we hope to be able to convince the Selection Committee of AFP of our commitment to the unique academic partnership and continuous good will to improve the teaching and research in the field of Sociology in the Kyrgyz Republic with spillovers to Central Asian scientific and educational communities. Many challenges have been overcome since 2005 when our department's cooperation with AFP was launched for the first time. Yet many still remain that require careful planning and important decision-making to be made amidst the rapidly changing environment and the growing scholar body with diverse needs and aspirations. Both, the achievements and the challenges energize our departmental growth further in the directions set out by its faculty and student body, including the various visiting lecturers and researchers that over years have contributed towards making our program one of the most prominent. Sociology of AUCA has already established itself as a highly promising program for students with the well-known faculty scholarly involvement in the research community of the Central Eurasia, Former Soviet Countries, Post-communist space.

We wish to regain the support of AFP for the academic year 2011-2012 to enable us to compound the effort of the faculty members and to remain afloat with the rapidly emerging conditions and requirements imposed by the national and global change (i.e., the political changes in the Kyrgyz Republic, in the North Africa and the Middle East, the economic and political expansion of societies in BRICs countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China), the overcoming of the world financial crises, and the looming climate change adaptations and mitigation).

This Departmental Development Plan (DDP) is a timely aid to reflect upon what has been done thus far, where we are now, and in which directions we would like to proceed. We will provide brief statements on all of the above, highlight our achievements, outline our wishes and plans, and detail the needs identified for the academic year 2011-2012 and beyond.

A brief overview of the history of cooperation between the AUCA Department of Sociology and AFP will reveal such achievements as a) the curriculum and the faculty development that have been dynamic, and b) the research activities that often have resulted in our faculty members' publishing and co-publishing. The history of cooperation will also reveal that there is a continuous challenge of faculty recruitment and retention, integration and institutionalization of good practices and processes, and providing stability and continuity to some of the efforts undertaken throughout years.

Since 2005 the following had been prioritized: the development of the core curriculum, the faculty's research skills, the theory colloquia and the research methods seminars – all directed at departmental capacity building (as there were no Western trained PhD holding faculty members among permanent faculty, some visiting PhD holders). The low capacity challenge is becoming resolved as at least five former faculty members are pursuing their PhD studies in universities

in the USA, UK, and Italy. While at least two have returned and taught at the department while working on their PhDs (Gulzat Botoeva and Jamilya Jeenbaeva), and all five have indicated interest in building academic links and opportunities for cooperating with the Department of Sociology at AUCA.

However, for the year 2011-2012 and beyond **the focus shifts slowly away from core research skills training in methods and theory towards the more technical skills of communicating, writing, preparing research for publication, and actually getting published in refereed journals** and respected scientific publications (probably in 2-3 years from now). In this respect, the development of the Code of Ethics is not only an important tool and framework to be developed by the faculty members for the Sociology program but also an important subject matter around which the Department of Sociology can unite its various members (former and current) and allow them to contribute their input, vision, course of action. It is also an important topic to be articulated and shared among the older and the younger members of the faculty, to understand the positioning and projections of faculty members' principles and choices in action that are socially accepted and scientifically just.

Also, the **development and conducting of Academic Writing Workshops for Sociology program**, for faculty and students, will be an important experiment with developing technical skills in writing and publishing scientific research done at AUCA, namely within Sociology program.

At the same time, throughout years certain issues remain unresolved or only partially resolved, and require continuous effort on the part of faculty and staff (i.e., high rotation of faculty members, staff churn rate, syllabi developed by visiting faculty and becoming obsolete as the faculty member leaves). We try here to reflect upon some of the aspects of departmental development that can only be clarified and resolved with time and consistent effort to eradicate them, or to revise our ways of dealing with them (retaining faculty members, high churn rate/rotation, external pressure such as Ministry of Education requirements and compliances, new Bard College affiliation requirements and compliances etc). While at the same time, we want to demonstrate that some of the visible or anticipated difficulties, may turn into a "blessing in disguise" and bring unexpected and often rewarding outcomes (i.e., faculty leaving to conduct their PhD studies, return with improved skills and bring about a wider and more tangible scholarly network and opportunities).

For the academic year 2011-2012 the department led by the Associate Professor Galina Gorborukova the new Head of the Sociology Department would like to re-start the cooperation with AFP and proposes **four candidates for returning scholar funding**:

Assistant Professor, Jamilya Jeenbaeva, PhD candidate at the University of Trento;

Instructor Aida Bekturova, MSc in Sociology, Lund University, Sweden;

Instructor Selbi Jumayeva, MA in Theory and Practice of The Human Rights University of Essex, Colchester, United Kingdom;

Instructor Altynai Djumabaeva, MA in Sociology – Anthropology, University of Sciences and Technologies of Lille – Lille 1, France.

The AFP funding provides a chance to direct these young faculty members' efforts towards academic development, instead of working in other capacities lured away by higher wages that those offered at the university. All of the proposed returning scholars are committed to improving the existing projects, strengthening their professional and departmental networks

and helping the students to understand the practice of sociology at home and abroad as a discipline, vocation, and professional career.

Also, the **Sociology Department would like to request AFP support of International Scholar funding to bring the Associate Professor Nina Bandelj, University of California, Irvine** (PhD from University of Princeton) to the Sociology at AUCA during the academic year 2011-2012. This distinguished scholar is one of the most impressive young female scientists working in the post-communist space and in US academia, combining some of the best practices from both worlds. Professor Bandelj has been teaching, conducting research and published a lot, and has a wealth of experience to contribute to fulfilling the current priorities in the development of the Sociology Program at AUCA.

Integration of young faculty members into the program's mainstream and keeping the diversity of research interests at the same time may be a challenge, yet we aim at supporting all faculty members in developing the core teaching and supervising skills, while also specializing in their own preferred areas and bringing their own vision and experience to the departmental development planning (through class visits, mentoring schemes, and faculty colloquia). The team that is being formed at the Sociology Department as of now is dedicated to strengthening the department, building its capacity, and expanding the departmental growth as direct and indirect contributions to the social development in the Kyrgyz Republic. Thus the faculty will be strengthened through a strategic planning event, and a stable communicative platform such as a Sociology Club based at the department with a self-sustaining online presence.

The vision of the Department of Sociology at AUCA may be summarized as follows:

- Its Sociology program is one of the most desirable programs of studies for freshmen to enter AUCA;
- Its Sociology program is one of several social science fields at AUCA that provides a strong grounding in Sociology as a discipline, as well as a strong support to multi-disciplinary approaches while teaching, studying, and publishing from within the department;
- Its Sociology program is consistent in its development, i.e., in teaching, curriculum development, and in research that its faculty members and students get involved in – all supporting and conducive to clearer specialization, depth of knowledge, and expertise. A kind of programmatic branding of the department's key teaching and research areas are identified, and funding and resources are pulled towards supporting these priorities;
- The Sociology department is aware of its constitutive members, such as administrative (i.e., Dean, administrating assistant, nominated student advisers), teaching and research faculty (i.e., permanent faculty, visiting faculty, honorary faculty, etc.), students (current, perspective, as well as alumni), and its program. The program integrates all members of the department into a coherent final product that is advertised, claimed, and consumed. While we are careful not to commodify education here, however, having a Sociology program with high rotation of staff, faculty, and students is a very difficult task that requires a lot of equilibration skill. It is important to take a look at the department from the perspective of a unit operating within a larger structure (i.e., AUCA, Kyrgyz Republic, Central Asia, etc.) that has its own localized, specialized, and resource use priorities, which must not be overlooked. With this in mind, Department of Sociology may require a strategic planning workshop, where the vision for the Department of Sociology as a unit by itself could re-introduce the important interactions among the department's members, between the department and other universities, programs, networks, etc.

We would like to request AFP support for the following five key areas and further in this document demonstrate the kind of activities for which we need AFP funding:

- **Sociology program improvements** (i.e., syllabi revisions, internship placements improvements, Sociology Code of Ethics development, introduction and sharing);
- **Clarification and streamlining of the departmental procedures, rules, frameworks, planning** (i.e., library book purchases, conference and research funding, developing a joint document with the President's office on establishing inter-university collaboration) especially with the new Bard College affiliation requirements;
- **Faculty capacity development** (i.e., conducting academic writing workshops, young faculty integration/induction, revision of departmental procedures, joint faculty and student conferences, guest lectures);
- **Faculty stability, retention, network strengthening** (i.e., recruiting new faculty members from among the Sociology program alumni, building up motivations for faculty members to return after completing PhD studies, Sociology Club, online presence and communication, establishing the award of "Honorary Faculty Member" and "Honorary Alumni of Sociology AUCA" to thank those who have contributed to the development and improvement of the Department of Sociology through the years and to motivate more mutual help and support);
- **Extracurricular activities of faculty and students** (faculty and student retreats, strategic planning retreats, participation in yoga, AUCA Choir, faculty and alumni reunions, and efforts in overcoming the perception of sociology as elitist, scholastic, and marginal and instead help in making sociology communicable, trendy, and mainstream).

II. ACHIEVED GOALS FROM DDPS OF PREVIOUS YEARS

1. BACKGROUND, HISTORY OF COOPERATION

The start of cooperation between Sociology Department and AFP dates back to 2005. The first returning scholars to receive AFP funding were the following full-time faculty members:

- Mehriqul Ablezova, MA in Sociology, Ball State University, USA
- Medina Aitieva, MA in Sociology, Ball State University, USA
- Gulzat Botoeva, MSc in Social Research, Essex University, UK
- Aisalkyn Botoeva, MA in Sociology and Social Anthropology, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary.

In 2008-2009 Jamilya Jeenbaeva (MSc Population and Development, The London School of Economics and Political Science, The London University) joined the Sociology Department as full-time faculty member (after having taught part-time since 2004) and was awarded AFP returning scholar funding.

There have been four International Scholars selected by the Sociology Department who were granted AFP funding, those are as follows: Professor Charles Lemert (2008-2009), Professor Stephen Fuchs (2007-2008), Associate professor Baliyar Sanghera (2006-2007), and Associate professor Sarah Amsler (2005-2006). These distinguished scholars have been instrumental in helping our department improve and grow its scientific capacity alongside its scholarly network.

2. Curriculum: Developing, Improving, Overcoming Challenges

On 25 December 2008, the Department of Sociology was awarded the renewal of the License of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kyrgyz Republic to teach “Sociology” as undergraduate program. In April 2009 the Department of Sociology successfully passed the attestation process of the Ministry of Education of the Kyrgyz Republic on the subject of its curriculum’s and teachers’ compliance with the higher educational standards that allows the department during 5 years to confer upon its graduates the certificates of ‘Bachelor’ degree in Sociology.

New courses are being developed to meet the requirements of the Ministry of Education. The task to develop two new courses was given to Jamilya Jeenbaeva, namely Course on Social Pedagogy and Course on Demography (Population and Development). These two courses will be taught in the Spring semester of 2012.

Since 2010 the new requirements of Bard College degree conferral affiliation entered into force. The Sociology Department, among with all other departments of AUCA was asked to comply fully, which among others involves that all senior students write a thesis to graduate with a Bard College degree (alongside the Kyrgyz Ministry of Education degree). Thus, among the main challenges this year has been faculty shortage to supervise senior theses research and writing, while also teaching the Senior Thesis Seminar to the senior students. We would like to re-vise the requirement for teaching Senior Thesis, and propose that the Seminar is taught at the end of the junior year (3rd year of studies), so that the students have enough time to prepare and learn how to successfully tackle the Senior Thesis project.

3. Ensuring Faculty Stability

The Sociology department managed to attract three alumni to teach at the program after their graduate studies. Aida Bekturova (graduate of 2005) joined our faculty in the Fall semester of 2010, after completing her Master of Science in Development Studies at the University of Lund, Sweden. Aida teaches courses in Introduction to Political Economy, Comparative Sociology and Introduction to Social Research Methods, and supervises third year students as a student advisor. Aida will teach full-time in the Fall semester of 2011 as well.

Selbi Jumaeva (graduate of 2009) will start teaching in the Fall semester of 2011.

Altynai Djumabaeva (graduate of 2008) will start teaching in the Fall semester of 2011.

Also, we managed to retain Jamilya Jeenbaeva as a member of our faculty during the academic year 2010-2011 despite her being away from department on coursework for her PhD program during the Fall semester. Jamilya’s workload during the Fall semester 2010 included two senior theses writing students’ supervision, and development of two new courses in Social Pedagogy and Demography. Jamilya will be teaching two courses in the Fall of 2011 and two courses in the Spring semester of 2012, while also supervising senior students writing their theses, and also working on her own PhD related research.

4. Honors, Rewards, Promotion and Professional Development

In 2010-2011 the departmental growth was multifaceted. Mehrigiul Ablezova was promoted to become Academic coordinator of AUCA-AUAF (American University of Afghanistan) collaboration project, a 3-year endeavor funded by USAID. She is also a head of Student Intellectual life Committee.

During the fall 2009 semester, Galina Gorborukova completed an internship at the department of Sociology of the University of Bristol, England. She also participated in Workshop in Research-Based Teaching and Course Design in Akbuk, Turkey, in August 2010.

Jamilya Jeenbaeva was selected for PhD studies scholarship at the International School in Local Development and Global Dynamics, University of Trento in September 2009, and after completing her PhD coursework in Spring 2011 she is now becoming more involved with the Sociology Programme of AUCA once again.

5. Research Activities and Publications

Gulnara Ibraeva, "Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan" in Media Sustainability Index. (New York, IREX, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 in progress)

Galina Gorborukova published a manual for students on the subject of Sociology of the Social Stratification and the Inequality System, in 2010.

Mehriqiul Ablezova, Kirghizistan : Un scénario où ceux qui partent perdent autant que ceux qui restent, *Hommes & Migrations*, 2010, n 1284. Pending upon publication: *Everyday Morality in Families and a Critique of Social Capital: An Investigation into Moral Judgments, Responsibilities and Sentiments in Kyrgyzstani Households*, *Theory and Society*, 2011.

6. Involvement in University-wide Committees and Activities

Sociology Department is one of the most active departments that provides committee members to the Academic Senate and participates in the life of the university through the following:

Galina Gorborukova – member of the Academic Senate and the Head of Student and the Head of Appeals Committee;

Gulnara Ibraeva – member of the Research and Promotion Committee;

Mehriqiul Ablezova – member of the Academic Senate and the Head of Student Intellectual Life Committee;

Beishegul Alieva – member of the Liberal Arts Course Curriculum development group.

II. PLANS FOR 2011-2012 – KEY CHALLENGES AND POSITIONING

1. Curriculum Development and Improvement

For the next academic year we have set out the following objectives and plans that constitute our positioning and acting upon identified challenges related to curriculum development:

- 1) Standardize course load and grading criteria. It has been found that consistency in terms of student work load and grading criteria varies across courses, which is a challenge. To ensure comparability we would like to cooperate with WARC (Writing and Academic Resource Center), which was established at AUCA in the fall of 2010. WARC will assume the role of an independent expert and with their assistance we are intending to complete the following:
 - a. Jointly revise with all members of the department the requirements and grading criteria. E.g., the reading load for each course will be revised in order to ensure that it corresponds with the level of teaching (100-level courses, 200-level, etc.).

- b. Review the assignments proposed in each course, and check their consistency with the course learning outcomes.
 - c. Revise and update the syllabus for Introduction to Political Economy, which is a required course. The syllabus has not been updated since 2005. Literature and questions related to latest trends in development studies will be added to course program. Prof. Dr. Russell Kleinbach, from Philadelphia University, who was a mentor-teacher for the course during Spring, 2011, semester, has an extensive knowledge on the subject and will be assisting in revising the syllabus.
- 2) While conducting research our faculty members and students have been facing the challenges related to ethics of framing and asking questions, ethical treatment of respondents and audiences, ethical representation of collected data, ethical reporting and writing up the research. Thus, it is paramount that the Department of Sociology develops and implements the Code of Ethics as a common set of values and a research guide for the scientific and professional work for the students, faculty and visiting researchers at the American University of Central Asia.
- α. To review/survey existing ethical challenges, previous encountered dilemmas and strategies of the most satisfactory resolution;
 - β. To draft the Code of Ethics for the Department of Sociology and incorporate it into the courses on Research Methods, Philosophies of Social Research and Senior Thesis Seminar;
 - χ. To present developed Code of Ethics to other departments and academic units at the American University of Central Asian and to larger academic and research audiences, and encourage a dialogue on ethics, integrity, competence and responsibility.
- 3) For many years some of the departmental procedures and processes remained informal, unarticulated and ad-hoc (orientation, student conference, new faculty integration, internships, library book orders, etc.). As the department and the program continues to grow there is an important challenge of institutionalizing the good practices, making processes and procedures transparent, transferrable, and tangible. We see the need in revising jointly with all members of the department old and new procedures and paperwork process, including internship requirement, departmental meetings frequency and timing, state examinations, entry examinations, advisership, supervising of senior thesis, new faculty integration, orientation, student and faculty research, student and faculty extracurricular activities.

This includes:

- a) developing joint procedures for budgeting library books orders with the aim of strengthening the course manuals and readers, and availability of reading materials for Sociology program students, developing frameworks for inter-university and international inter-departmental cooperation.
- b) improve student internship placements, i.e., we are working on how to provide various AUCA students an opportunity to have internship after the 2nd and 3rd year of study. At the moment, the opportunity of internship placements is being discussed with "Kompanion" a Bishkek based microfinance institution. AUCA Sociology students can conduct their internship in the Development Intelligence Unit (DIU) of Kompanion, under the guidance of our new faculty member Altynai Djumabaeva. Internship in DIU of

“Kompanion” will provide students with experience in development of research indicators, questionnaires, data gathering in communities, creating database and analysis charts.

2. Faculty Recruitment and Retaining through AFP Returning Scholar and International Scholar Support

Among the key challenges today is recruiting and retaining permanent faculty members with distinguished qualifications and experience, also especially after the departure of five full-time members of faculty to pursue their PhD studies. In the new school year starting from August 2011 we have commitments from four new faculty members joining the Sociology program:

1. Dr. Ruben Flores, PhD, Sociology, University of Kent, Canterbury, UK.
2. Benjamin Quasinowski, PhD student, Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology, Bielefeld University.
3. Altnai Djumabaeva, MA in Sociology Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille – Lille 1, France.
4. Selbi Jumayeva, MA in Theory and Practice of The Human Rights University of Essex, Colchester, United Kingdom

The following faculty members who are currently teaching at the Sociology Department remain as full-time faculty during 2011-2012 academic year:

1. Galina Gorborukova, Associate Professor, Kandidat Nauk, Kyrgyz State National University, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (also Head of the Sociology Department since June 2010);
2. Gulnara Ibraeva, Associate Professor, Kandidat Nauk in Sociology, St. Petersburg University, Post Graduate School, departments of journalism and sociology
3. Mehrigul Ablezova, Assistant Professor, MA in Sociology, Ball State University, Muncie, IN, USA
4. Beishegul Alieva, Assistant Professor, Aspirantura in Western Philosophy, Moscow State University, Moscow
5. Jamilya Jeenbaeva, Assistant Professor, PhD candidate, University of Trento
6. Aida Bekturova, Instructor, MSc in Sociology, Lund University, Sweden

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All faculty members have a strong will to contribute their knowledge obtained abroad to the development of the department. The AFP funding provides a chance to direct their efforts towards academic development, instead of working in other capacities lured away by higher wages than those offered at the university. All of the proposed returning scholars are committed to improving the existing projects, strengthening their professional and departmental networks and helping the students to understand the practice of sociology at home and abroad as a discipline, vocation, and professional career.

Also, the Sociology Department would like to request AFP support of International Scholar funding to bring the Associate Professor Nina Bandelj, University of California, Irvine (PhD from University of Princeton) to the Sociology at AUCA during the academic year 2011-2012. This distinguished scholar is one of the most impressive young female scientists working in the post-communist space and in US academia, combining some of the best practices from both worlds. Professor Bandelj has been teaching, conducting research and published a lot, and has a wealth of experience to contribute to fulfilling the current priorities in the development of the Sociology Program at AUCA.

3. New Faculty Capacity Building: Academic Writing and Transparency in requirements

It is foreseen that the new faculty members will require assistance in integrating into the departmental work, including teaching and curriculum development contributions. Providing sustainability and convergence of curriculum practices and teaching methodology across full-time, part-time, visiting, international, and honorary faculty members of the Sociology Department has been a challenge for many years, which remained unfulfilled.

This year it is one of the key priorities and we propose to take first step in building sustainability and convergence by initiating measures for **successful adaptation of new and junior faculty members:**

- 1) One of the ways to develop the skills of new faculty members is peer evaluation. Attending each other's classes will help new instructors to assess each other, give feedback and exchange teaching practices and techniques.
- 2) Another way to help the new department members is a mentorship program that we are planning to introduce.
 - a. It is a university policy for department members to attend at least one of each other's classes and assess each other's teaching skills. We will make this a regular practice, this way new faculty members will get feedback from all teaching staff of the department and have a chance to learn new teaching techniques from senior faculty members.
- 3) New university policy requires each full-time teaching staff member to conduct a scientific study; three academic credits are allocated for it each semester. In order to fulfill this requirement and motivate our junior faculty members to participate in scientific studies we are planning to conduct the following activities:
 - a. Organize workshops for junior faculty members, where current research trends in Kyrgyzstan will be discussed along with new developments in methodological approaches in research.

- b. Together with WARC (Writing and Academic Research Center), organizing a writing workshop, where junior faculty members could improve their academic writing skills.
- c. Organize a conference where the studies conducted by junior department members will be presented and discussed. Holding an interdisciplinary conference could also develop inter-departmental cooperation.
- d. Publishing the conference papers in AUCA “Vestnik” could be a good start for junior faculty members.
- e. In collaboration with the SRC (Social Research Center) a series of presentations could be organized for AUCA faculty members and students, where the results of the studies could be presented and discussed.

4. Expanding Faculty Networks and Building Inter-university Sociology Links

It is our aim to continue strengthening the network of scholars who have been instrumental at developing Sociology program in the past, and who have expressed their interest in remaining our supporters. Thus, the convergence of the departments’ research interests with those of departing members may help in creating possibilities for joint research between different departments and universities. We hope that this will facilitate our department’s objective of keeping in touch with at least the members of the faculty who are now placed in PhD programs in universities abroad, and with those who are teaching at their home universities and keep Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia within their research field and interests.

Department has a history of engaging with the experts, researchers and professors outside of university both in Kyrgyzstan and abroad to contribute to the lectures. This year it is planned to develop and implement a more systematic plan on the guest lecture practices, sociology club and interdepartmental and inter-university exchange:

1. Guest lectures practices will allow to enrich course syllabi with the expert practitioner perspective and give an opportunity for students to network and explore application of the course topics. Moreover, the profile of guest lecturer is diverse: department resource expert, local expert, international consultants, visiting researcher, NGO practitioners, professors from other departments and universities both in Kyrgyzstan and other countries. The method of involvement will be visiting the lecture hall or holding an online conference hall, ensuring pre-lecture communication with the course instructor/supervisor and students by providing reading lists, discussion questions and feedback on the lecture-related student coursework.
2. Sociology club will be established to hold regular events for faculty and students to engage in a professional and academic dialogue beyond the syllabus and classroom allowing meaningful engagement as scholarly peers and researchers. Events will include discussion and reading groups, faculty/student lunchtime seminars and open departmental seminars. All the events and panel themes will be pre-planned and develop practices of planning, connecting and networking with the panelists within AUCA and other universities and engaged participation/attendance, although allowing space for other panelist opportunities. Departmental seminars will be open to panelists and attendees outside of department and university. Sociology club, its events and materials will be available via various media outlets like bulletins, podcasts, video-casts and other new media/social networking instruments.
3. Sociology Club will also be available and accessible via new media outlets and social networks. Our Department will launch a blog that will allow more engaging ways to outreach and involve faculty, students, external experts and emerging body of scholars to learn about

our events, activities, practices and other opportunities in the field of Sociology and give one's feedback and critique through comments, polls/surveys and other social share buttons. The blog and its weekly themes will be moderated through a rotation of faculty and junior and senior students. The blog will offer themes on a regular basis (thinker, paradigm, trend) and build up an online resource with bibliographies on certain topics, reading lists, uploaded department materials and links to other online libraries and databases. The Sociology Club will also be able to outreach and make the content available to wider audiences and readership through the mirror blogs, microblogging, social and academic networks. The possible significance of creating this virtual space is that it may serve as a pre-cursor for creating an online sociologist community to become a larger membership virtual platform in Kyrgyzstan.

Becoming the AFP funded Department again is very important, and we have detailed above how it will benefit the tangible improvements in teaching, curriculum development, professional development of faculty members, as well as interaction between faculty and students internally within Sociology program and in its various external representations (i.e., through its honorary faculty members, alumni, among potential students, and research organizations and academic community, other publics).