

# INSTITUTIONALIZING AND ACADEMIC CULTURE OF RESEARCH

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The central task of a university is to generate intellectual curiosity and the knowledge that satisfies it. The American University in Kyrgyzstan undertakes this task in the urgent context of a relatively new and still developing country. Kyrgyzstan today needs a knowledge base for achieving both political freedom and political stability, both economic justice and economic growth, while at the same time preserving what is best about the rich cultural traditions of this beautiful country.

The kind of research that is at the heart of the intellectual life of the university expands the horizons of our knowledge. It aims at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories in the light of new facts, and the practical application of theories. Theory, scientifically acceptable general principles offered to explain phenomena, increases our capacity to invent explanations. Research is most effective when it is driven by theory. Research is theory driven when it is guided by a theory in such a way that allows it to bolster, or undermine, our confidence in the theory. Good research uses theory to tie its findings into a wider body of existing knowledge in ways that refine and contribute to that body of knowledge. To ensure that our research findings are valid and that they do indeed expand our horizons of knowledge we must subject our research to review by scholars who do not know whose work they are reviewing (as in refereed professional journals).

Research is of critical importance to the vitality of a university. It provides common ground for the faculty as a community of people supporting one another in creating knowledge and expanding intellectual horizons. In such a community the excitement is palpable. As we share our ideas with colleagues, lively intellectual conversations help us to refine those ideas and encourage us to pursue them.

Research also enlivens teaching. Sharing new ideas and new findings with students engenders intellectual excitement which becomes contagious. It is exciting that some AUK students and some AUK faculty have participated in building Habitat for Humanity houses and that some AUK students have befriended poor children in a program sponsored by a local restaurant. This is wonderful. How much more wonderful if these good works can be in the context of an intellectual environment in which students are encouraged to ask and seek answers to questions such as: Why are people poor? How does poverty affect individual poor people? What is the impact of poverty on society? What ways of addressing poverty are more effective? How much public support is there for the more effective ways? Are there cultural resources within religious and other traditional organizations that will help those who want to decrease poverty?

Once a culture of research is institutionalized AUK, faculty, students, and alumni can participate in applying research to the needs of Kyrgyzstan. The

culture of a university is the integrated pattern of shared attitudes, values, goals, practices, and social arrangements that characterizes it. "Institutionalization" in this case refers to the process of building a culture of research in to the social structure of the university. No outsider can tell you how to institutionalize a culture of research in your university. Visitors can share information about American universities (and others), but your university is different, and your society is different.

YOU will be the experts on institutionalizing a culture of research at AUK. Remember, however, that there is a relation between the kind of research model adopted and the kinds and amounts of outside support the university can obtain.

AUK, its faculty and students, will benefit from moving toward being a research-oriented university. If you all work together to build such a culture and, through your hard work and enthusiasm acquire sufficient new resources you will all find your work richly rewarded in the joy of discovery and sharing your discoveries. Moreover, if you are successful in structure building and resource acquisition, then you will be better paid, better regarded in the community, and in your discipline, and you will be better contributors to society.

The rewards of being a research-oriented university are great. But, despite much interest in research and some excellent research going on at AUK, this university has a long way to go in providing time, space, and other resources to facilitate your research. Also, rewards are not yet in place to fully recognize faculty's research accomplishments and motivate further research. Still there are encouraging signs. For example, AUK's administration is aware of these prob-

lems and working hard to try to solve them. The appointment of a Development Officer is a good step in this direction. Also the establishment of centers such as the new East-West Center is an essential way of providing support for faculty research. The success of this Center can pave the way for the eventual establishment of other Centers which may meet the needs of some of you better than this one does. The proposed Sociology Lab would be another important resource for AUK research.

Increasing the emphasis on research at AUK will be quite costly, requiring hard decisions about the allocation of present resources and, especially, increased efforts to secure funds from outside sources. I can certainly imagine all at AUK working together to enhance the role of research in all aspects of the university's life.

Let's begin with the necessary investment in faculty. Nothing will increase the emphasis on research more than the visibility of faculty role models. There are three ways to increase their visibility. First those current faculty who already exemplify the rigorous research activity desired should be identified and be invited to share their work with others in university-wide lectures and in specialized faculty seminars. At Indiana University one person is chosen annually as the distinguished researcher of the year. In addition to other rewards that person gives a university-wide lecture on the findings of his or her research.

Second, those faculty who are not yet fully equipped to do the research desired, should be given opportunities for additional training, usually at universities in other countries. Of course this is already happening to some extent in AUK's relationship to Indiana University. AUK

should seek additional partners among universities around the world.

Third, in the normal course of recruitment of new faculty, special attention should be given to bringing into the university people with the latest training in doing research in their fields. Sometimes this will be your own former students who have obtained research-oriented academic degrees abroad.

Once faculty have good models and good training for doing research, the most important thing they need is time to do research. Obviously this will eventually mean those who do research will here and there have time off from teaching. But faculty can also have more time for research if they can do more of their research (and their teaching preparation) in less time. That is why your administration must give high priority to finding, inside or outside the university, the money to increase the speed of your internet access. Taking full advantage of the internet may also require a person in the library and/or in the computer science department to be sure necessary interfacing software is in place, and in some cases that subscriptions are obtained. Full use of the internet is indispensable for efficient use of faculty time.

Still, it must be stressed that if faculty are encouraged to do more research, they will have to spend less time teaching! There are many mechanisms for giving faculty time for research. Note that in the model presented sabbatical leaves are more or less automatically granted continuing faculty, but that there is competition for the other types of released time.

One of the major sources of released time for teaching in American universities is research grants from outside the university. One way AUK can help provide time for research is through encour-

aging faculty to apply for research grants, and aiding those faculty not only in identifying appropriate potential funders, but also aiding in the actual grant application process.

If faculty are to teach less because they are given time for research, they must be held accountable for use of that time. I do not mean, of course, that they should punch a time clock. Rather, the donors, the board of trustees, the administration, as well as other faculty will want to see in the long run research products that justify the released time from teaching.

Judging applications for research time must apply rigorous criteria including the scholarly importance of the proposed research as supported by letters from experts in the discipline and the qualifications of the applicant as certified by previous publications in refereed journals. Committees making award decisions will rely on the judgment of outside referees-either through the applicant's submission of articles published in refereed journals or through specific letters of reference in support of the application. For major awards, the awarding committee may want to send a copy of the application to a referee or referees of their own choosing. The collective wisdom of the faculty, especially of those faculty who are models of research, is the best source of the criteria for evaluation. Also, committees making awards should be composed primarily of faculty.

Nothing will more readily spark an interest in rigorous research than the accurate perception, that faculty doing good research are rewarded. Star researchers can be rewarded with special honors and special titles. Don't rule out the possibility of getting endowed chairs for such persons. Let's not underesti-

mate the power of money as a reward that motivates research. One model is for a certain percent of money available for salary increases each year to be held back specifically for distribution to those who have shown the best quality and quantity of research activity during the previous year.

Another aspect of institutionalizing research is the provision of space for research. First at the most basic level the university must give a high priority to ensuring that each faculty member undertaking research activity has a private desk where work can be left undisturbed. For example, as an inducement to apply for an outside grant a faculty member could be promised a desk of his/her own in a research office with perhaps 3 other desks for 3 other professors.

In addition to private space for research activities, there needs to be space where faculty engaged in similar research can interact informally with one another. One model for providing this kind of environment is that of research centers. Your new East-West Center could possibly develop in this direction. And if it is successful, other centers with foci more in tune with other departments and interests could follow. Sociology's proposal for a research laboratory might also be the seed from which a center could develop. As centers develop and are successful in attracting outside funds-- they can provide not only space but research materials and equipment.

Informal exchanges on research ideas can also occur in discussions surrounding a University Research Lecture Series, usually with rather broad research topics, and also in connection with occasional faculty research seminars on narrower research topics.

The general management of research activity is an institutional responsibility.

AUK needs a structure for supervising research to be sure that research is carried out in conformance with a code of ethics that protects individuals who may be the subjects of the research or whose lives may be affected by the research. A key feature of any such code will necessarily be that the informed consent of participants in any research project as been obtained prior to the beginning of the research.

Another aspect of the institutional management of research is the receiving, dispensing, and accounting for funds from research grants. On the one hand this institutional management relieves the researcher of much busy work that consumes time and energy best used in research, on the other hand it assures funders that their funds are being used precisely as they intended.

My focus is on helping you to see the value of moving more in the direction of a research university and to help stimulate your thinking about ways to do that. I believe that research is prior to teaching, giving it vitality. I also believe a knowledge of research methods will make more effective even the teaching of those who do not themselves do research. Still, the proper role of research vis-a-vis teaching at AUK will need to be vigorously debated. Care must be taken that in the transition toward a more research oriented university your good teachers are not demoralized.

Sociologist Elise Boulding argues that we cannot make something happen unless we can first imagine what it would be like if it happened. AUK faculty must be engaged in the collective task of imagining a future that will provide you what you need to do the research you want to

do. But it will take more than imagination. Henry David Thoreau spoke of a "morrow which the mere passage of time will not bring to dawn." The AUK we can imagine will require dedicated and diligent work from the administration but principally from the faculty. Much of the institutionalization of a culture of research will require outside money. Fortunately some of you have research accomplishments and activities that can be presented. But funders approached by AUK will ask what evidence that a large proportion of your faculty will do research once this grant is awarded.

Devise your research agendas highlighting exciting and socially significant research problems. Submit these ideas

and pilot projects for rigorous review. You don't always need a lot of time and resources to come up with good research ideas. And even implementing research ideas may require fewer resources than you think. We do not really know where it will end, but

you will have already begun to reap the exhilarating intellectual rewards of becoming that kind of community of scholars which generates intellectual curiosity and pursues the research to satisfy it.

Many of you participate in associations within your discipline, and some of you have even yourselves started such associations that, will help to motivate your research.