

The Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar Visiting Advisors Report

University of Wroclaw
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Team Members:

Dr. Jochen Fried, Director of the Universities Project Central and Eastern European Program, Salzburg Seminar

Professor Edward Jakubauskas, President Emeritus of Central Michigan University; Senior Economist, Center for International Business and Economics Studies, University of Colorado at Denver

Dr. Jan Sadlak, Chief of Section for Higher Education Policy and Reform, UNESCO

Introduction

The visiting advisors spent four memorable and academically rewarding days of consultation at the University of Wroclaw (hereafter referred to as "UW"), meeting the rectorate, directors of institutes and departments, faculty deans, faculty members, representatives of student organizations, and the university's central administration, to discuss various aspects of university governance, management and development. The team owes special thanks to the chief organizers of the visit: Professor Roman Duda, Rector of the UW; Professor Zdzislaw Latajka, Vice-Rector for Research and International Relations; as well as Professor Andrej Witkowski, Vice-Rector for Education; and Ms. Jagoda Krasniewska, Director of the Office of International Relations. The discussions were characterized by a spirit of openness and dedication, making the visit a memorable experience.

Agenda

Prior to the visit, the UW presented a report addressing the following issues:

- Historical development of the UW
- The mission statement/structure
- Finances and administration
- Student education
- Research
- Academic staff development
- International relations
- Student affairs

The UW identified the following four issues as priority issues which would serve as a starting point for the consultations:

- University administration and finance
- Strategic planning
- Relations between the University and its stakeholders
- Students' needs and their participation in quality assessment and institutional affairs

The written report and supplementary information received from the UW greatly facilitated the preparatory work of the visiting team. Prior to departure for Wrocław, the team members and the president of the Salzburg Seminar held a tele-conference, developing consensus on several items to be discussed during the visit.

The program of the visit began with a one-hour preliminary meeting with Vice-Rector Latajka, designed to apprise the advisors of recent developments of the UW, as well as to exchange mutual expectations concerning the consultations and finalize the various agenda items. Following this meeting, the team had the opportunity to view some of the UW's buildings, which are located throughout Wrocław. The tour helped the team visualize the size and diversity of the physical plant of the UW and to appreciate the efforts of the university to provide adequate study and working conditions for students, professors and staff. On the afternoon of the first day, the team met with representatives of the university administration, the Bursary and the Teaching Office. This meeting provided additional background information on questions of university management and introduced the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) at UW. During the following two days, four sessions were organized - each lasting for 3-4 hours - devoted to the individual issues mentioned above. At each of these sessions, the team was joined by a group of between four and eight Wrocław colleagues, named by the rectorate of UW because of their expertise with regard to the issue at hand. Lunch breaks and evening dinners also provided an opportunity to continue the discussions that had started during the sessions.

At the end of the three-day consultation period, the team presented an oral report to Rector Duda and Vice-Rector Latajka, outlining its preliminary observations and findings. This report elaborates on these findings and offers suggestions and advice on a set of issues that emerged as particularly relevant and timely. The team would like to stress that the report is the result of a joint endeavor of both the visiting advisors and the UW representatives. It is thanks to the commitment and congeniality of the UW participants that the advisors were able to glean a sound understanding of the issues addressed in this report.

The University of Wrocław in National and Local Context

Together with the universities in Warsaw, Cracow and Poznan, the UW is one of the leading higher education institutions in Poland, both in terms of size and academic standing. It consists of eight faculties: chemistry, philology, physics and astronomy, mathematics and computer science, historical and pedagogical sciences, natural sciences, social sciences, law and administration as well as several research and teaching units which are not part of a specific faculty. According to the latest figures, the UW has some 34,000 registered students with slightly more than 50 per cent of them enrolled in part-time study programs or evening study courses. The total number of staff employed at UW is close to 3,500, half of them as academic teachers.

Poland is a country with a relatively high density of institutions offering tertiary education. There are 132 public higher education institutions with an enrollment of about 900,000 students. In addition, there are 145 private higher education institutions which cater to another 200,000 students. Almost all public institutions offer study programs at doctoral, magister (an equivalent to master level) and bachelor levels (called "licencjat"). Only 26

private higher education institutions have the right to award the magister degree.

In the Lower Silesia region, where Wrocław is situated, 14 public and 9 private higher education institutions present a wide variety of choices for students. In Wrocław alone, a town with approximately 600,000 inhabitants, there are more than 10 higher education institutions and colleges with a total student population of well beyond 60,000. Clearly, higher education constitutes an important social, cultural and economic factor in the life of the town and the region.

The UW itself can look back on an intriguing history, reflective of the changing fate of this part of Europe. It was established as a small Jesuit Academy in 1702 by the Austrian Emperor Leopold I, but changed both its national identity and denomination some 100 years later, when in 1811 the King of Prussia decided to move the Protestant Viadrina University from Frankfurt/Oder to Wrocław (or Breslau, as it was then called). For the next century, the UW - though part of the Prussian and later, German higher education system - was not only a place of academic excellence, but also of cultural osmosis, attracting students of various nationalities, as well as Poles. This situation ended abruptly in 1939, when foreign students were expelled from the university. In 1945, Wrocław became Polish, as did the university. At the same time, it inherited yet another academic-cultural tradition, becoming a place of refuge for many Polish scholars from the University in Lvov, Ukraine who had immigrated after western Ukraine was subsumed by the Soviet Union.

Thus, the UW remains a powerful symbol of almost 300 years of Central European history. It clearly has the potential to become an important proponent of European integration, by promoting regional and international co-operation in higher education and research.

The UW is firmly committed to provide "the highest level of education responding to the needs of the region and the society," as its mission statement pronounces. The role of the UW in the process of economic modernization and social transformation of the Lower Silesia region cannot be underestimated. Most UW students come from this region and remain after their graduation, enhancing the supply of a highly qualified work force in Lower Silesia. The UW recognizes that this aspect of social and economic relevance is one of the main criteria for its future development.

The visiting advisors team recognizes that over the past four years, the UW underwent a difficult and at times painful process of restructuring, caused by a severe financial crisis. The team applauds the success of the current rectorate and administration in managing this crisis by initiating organizational and institutional reform. It encourages the university to continue with these efforts in order to strengthen its capacity for further development. The members of the visiting team are aware that the financial condition of the UW depends on a systemic solution to the problem of Polish higher education funding. The problem will be addressed by the forthcoming law on higher education. However, this law should not preclude efforts of the UW to explore possibilities for diversification of financing.

Seven Issues and Recommendations

The visiting team agreed to focus its report on the following seven issues that, in its view, will pose particular challenges or present particular opportunities to the UW in the years to come:

1. The 300th anniversary of the University of Wroclaw
2. Enhancement of analytical capacity for planning and administration
3. Increased curriculum flexibility
4. Local/regional co-operation
5. Wroclaw Technological Park
6. International co-operation
7. European credit transfer system (ECTS)

This is by no means an exhaustive list or ranking order of the themes that were discussed during the course of the visit. It includes those areas which were identified by the UW and where the team felt confident in its ability to provide concrete advice, despite the limited duration of the visit.

1. The 300th Anniversary of the University of Wroclaw

A celebration of institutional history is part of the academic tradition which, if appropriately used, provides not only an opportunity for festive recognition of past achievements, but a source of inspiration and mobilization for future development. The visiting team believes that the forthcoming anniversary, the culmination of which should be events and actions carried out during the year 2002, offers a most propitious opportunity for the university to mobilize support and assert its place on the map of higher education—especially in the Central European region. The visiting team strongly supports the intention of the University to seek, through the Polish National Commission for UNESCO, that the 300th anniversary of the foundation of this university be included in UNESCO's calendar of important events in the field of education, culture and science. It would suggest seeking a joint honorary patronage of the presidents of the Polish Republic and the German Federal Republic, as well as the presidents of Austria and the Czech Republic. The UW should not forego corporate sponsorship of events. It should involve higher education institutions in Wroclaw and other academics centers. In this regard, support of the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland (CRASP) would be appropriate.

In practical terms, the recently created Office for Promotion and Alumni Affairs and bodies like the Regional Council should be directly involved in event planning. It would be appropriate to initiate major fund-raising efforts with targeted, quantitative goals such as the building of the new university library.

2. Enhancement of Analytical Capacity for Planning and Administration

Universities throughout the world face resource acquisition and utilization problems. The visiting team would like to draw attention to the U.S. experience, where many higher education institutions, similar to the UW in status and inspiration, have

established two support units to assist the chief executive officer, the equivalent of a Polish rector, in meeting institutional goals:

A Public Relations Unit (PRU) which would serve as a liaison to governmental funding agencies and legislatures to maximize efforts in presenting the best public relations posture with the press media and governmental decision-makers. A related mission of the public relations unit involves the mission of fund-raising and development, which almost always includes alumni, corporate, and community relations;

While the PRU is concerned with the overall enhancement of resources for the university, the main role of an internal Institutional Research Unit (IRU) would be to provide informed analysis and advice, which makes it possible to utilize resources more efficiently and effectively.

The UW could benefit greatly in exploring the possibility of establishing both types of units, either within the rector's office or by assignment to one of the top administrative positions of the university. This recommendation will be confined to the establishment of the "IRU" although for best results the establishment of both units is highly complementary and desirable.

The IRU should be a high level research group, comprised of 1 to 3 professionals from computer science, statistics, or the social sciences who assist a university's decision-makers by organizing data and information into a decision-making format. It is an imperative for the self-governing university to gather information from its own operations in a format which assists top levels of administration formulate appropriate decisions. The IRU could also conduct various special studies and surveys as needed by the rector, as well as the other governing bodies of the UW. The visiting team believes that other Polish universities will soon benefit by in-house analysis. Gradually, a situation similar to that in the U.S. will emerge, where professionals working in this area have a national association, publications, and periodic conventions to exchange information.

The proposed IRU should serve as the analytical arm of the governing bodies of the university, in particular the rector and the senate. It should also be the central depository for all data generated by the UW and its constituent parts. This would allow for regular analysis of the costs per student for the entire university, as well as its various faculties. Modelling and forecasting would provide the rector with factual knowledge of consequences of alternative policies. Such models might include the following:

- Forecasting the effects of raising special fees or tuition for specific disciplines
- Estimating the relative addition to costs versus revenue of increasing enrolments in certain areas
- Space utilization data for classrooms and offices in university buildings
- Effects on the budget by raising faculty or staff salaries by a certain amount
- Studies of student retention and dropout data by faculty
- Percentage of administrative costs in relation to costs of instruction by faculty
- Inter-institutional comparisons of cost and revenue data by discipline
- Savings incurred by developing networks in purchasing expensive equipment or contractual services
- Internal evaluation of costs and revenues by faculty and discipline
- Internal studies of grade inflation by faculty and discipline

- Studies of incomes of alumni by discipline
- Salary studies of faculty by international comparison
- Design and administration of course and teacher evaluations

It is recommended that the UW first appoint a small unit, and add staff as the need for studies progresses. One professional and one secretary (either full-time or shared) would suffice at the beginning. The professional should be someone trained in statistics, having computer skills and expertise as a social scientist. A physical scientist should not be ruled out, but in general, social scientists would have a greater professional interest in this type of work. The team would strongly support eventual application for a Fulbright or IREX grant to study for one semester at a leading U.S. university, comparable in scope and mission to that of the UW in order to enhance the professional competence of the IRU.

The IRU and the professional working in this area would make it possible to develop greater efficiency in the use of resources. Savings generated through this program would be available to teaching and research missions. Also, the IRU would be helpful in identifying ways in which greater effectiveness would be possible. It should be emphasized that the IRU and the professional in this unit would **not** be deciding policy, but providing the information that would aid the administration in making informed decisions.

Developing more efficient resource utilization represents a challenge to every university. The most effective way in which this can be accomplished is through better decision-making at the highest levels of the university, after options and alternatives are identified and relevant data and information have been considered. The IRU can play an important role in accomplishing this goal, as well as in the preparation of background analysis for strategic planning and institutional initiatives. A concrete example of the usefulness of the IRU could be the current on-going debate concerning two major institutional initiatives about which the visiting team was informed: that of re-integration of the Academy of Medicine and the creation of the Faculty of Theology. In case of a positive decision to create the latter faculty, the visitors would strongly support an ecumenical approach to curriculum, research and composition of the faculty, as well as to respect the principles of academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

3. Increased Curriculum Flexibility

It has been noted by numerous labor market specialists that university graduates will have to make at least three major occupational changes during their working careers. This will be necessitated by the requirements of an interdependent global economy, as well as by the rapidity of changes emerging world-wide in modern societies. The over-specialized student will be more vulnerable to these changes than ever before. A major element of protection against over-specialization is the need to develop greater flexibility in the curriculum.

It is proposed that the UW explore the possibility of introducing a system of electives whereby students could add courses outside of major fields, yet which would remain consistent with overall educational plans. Under this proposal the student would continue to major in a particular discipline, but would be permitted to elect courses in another

discipline, providing breadth to the educational experience.

Various possibilities for flexibility that should be studied and considered by the UW include the following options:

- The establishment of a “General Education Core,” not to exceed 30% of the course work, which would include courses in disciplines making it possible for a student to develop breadth of course work across a number of disciplines and fields. Thus a student majoring in physics would elect a “core” of electives which might include the social sciences and humanities and other physical sciences in addition to the course in physics. The “core” would be taken largely in the first and second years of collegiate work.
- A second possible option would be more conservative in terms of change and would allow a system of “major/minor” fields - the minor field not to exceed 10-20% of a student’s course work.

Possible combinations within this second option might include the following major/minor combinations in the educational plan:

Major	Minor
physics	chemistry
“ “	biology
economics	mathematics
“ “	political science
sociology	psychology
“ “	economics

- A third option is to develop flexibility for students in a selective “honors” program, with limited admission to those who are matriculated with a high admissions exam score, or high grades from secondary school.

4. Local/Regional Co-operation

Considerable cost savings could be achieved by the UW through the development of a regional consortium of public institutions in the Wroclaw area or in Poland as a whole. The purchasing officials of agencies in the area could explore the possibility of establishing agreements to purchase large quantities of supplies, computer equipment and software, utilities, and other contractual items. This arrangement would be in lieu of each institution purchasing small quantities of these items at high unit costs. It has long been understood by purchasing agents in co-operations and government agencies that purchases of goods and services in small lots always means higher unit costs than bulk purchases which take place because of unified buying arrangements. A recently signed agreement of co-operation with the Medical Academy could be a starting point for such an initiative.

On the other hand, the policy of enhanced local and regional co-operation should not be

limited to cost-saving measures. It could also open new strategic possibilities for joint research, inter-faculty programs of study and even for innovative areas and themes of doctoral theses.

5. Wroclaw Technological Park

In recent years, creation of technological parks, sometimes called science parks, has been a frequently-used means for facilitating co-operation between the university and industry, particularly with regard to technology transfer, promotion of academic entrepreneurship and contribution to local and regional development. Experience shows that it must be conceived as a matrix arrangement for **linking** and **facilitating**. Thus, it should offer an intellectual, organizational, technical, business, cultural and physical environment that will attract leading researchers and entrepreneurs from a variety of park tenants. In order to be an attractive place for work and investment, a comprehensive publicity and information campaign to highlight park assets (like location, technical and social facilities and programs) should be directed toward potential tenants. While the visiting team cannot discuss this project in great detail, it is aware of the existing agreement concerning the creation of the Wroclaw Technological Park. At the same time it would suggest that implementation of this initiative should be treated as a priority. In addition to those higher education institutions in Wroclaw which have already expressed an interest in this project, the visiting team considers that the research institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences should also have an opportunity to be associated with this important initiative.

The team would also like to draw attention to the importance of the Office of Industrial Liaison and Technology Transfer, which should promote co-operation between the UW, its partner academic institutions and industry, especially those involved in the activities of the Wroclaw Technological Park. It should provide information to industry on research capabilities and opportunities for technology transfer; identify sources of industrial funding; negotiate contract terms; assist members of the university in seeking patent protection for their intellectual property; and secure the commercial exploitation of research results.

6. International Co-operation

Universities throughout the world are nurturing international contacts as an important element of their overall mission. With the advancement of modern information technology, these contacts have become part of everyday academic life for many professors, especially those who are active in research. It can be safely claimed that in the world of academe, internationalization has the status of an intrinsic value.

There is no doubt that the UW recognizes the high value of international academic cooperation. It is also evident that a university with a 300 year history can draw upon a large number of contacts with partner institutions throughout Europe and beyond, both in the form of official bi-lateral partnership agreements and on the level of individual contacts between scholars across national boundaries. To facilitate and coordinate such partnerships and contacts, the UW has established an Office of International Relations with a very dedicated and proactive staff. The participation of the UW in numerous EU-

sponsored programs like Tempus Phare is further indication that the university is successfully trying to broaden and strengthen its international ties.

One of the clear shortcomings of internationalization at the UW is the low enrollment of foreign students: Only a mere 0.4 per cent of the total student population at the UW come from countries outside Poland (the majority from the NIS). There are obvious reasons for this: namely, Polish is the only language of instruction (with the exception of a small one-semester program on "Polish and Central European Studies" for US exchange students). Other reasons include a lack of student mobility from west to east, but also from east to east and the question of valuation ("what is the international value of a degree awarded by the University of Wroclaw?").

However, in the view of the visiting advisors team, the location of Wroclaw in the border triangle of three countries - Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic - may offer particularly conducive conditions for international co-operation. There are meritorious examples of trans-border co-operation on a regional basis, inspired and promoted by the geographical closeness of the universities involved: the triangle Aachen (Germany) - Maastricht (Netherlands) - Liège (Belgium) is such an example, as is the co-operation between several French, Swiss and German universities in the Upper Rhine region. The UW should explore the possibility of forming a close triangular partnership with the neighboring universities in Dresden and Liberec.

The collaboration of the three universities could materialize in many different ways, for instance:

- joint research teams that combine the intellectual resources and the research facilities of all three universities
- a junior faculty exchange program
- common postgraduate study programs with a long-term goal of creating a common postgraduate school
- a comprehensive accreditation scheme that would allow and encourage students to move freely from one university to another, combining course offerings
- joint outreach programs addressing the specific (economic, social, political) demands of the region

One of the main advantages of a regional approach to internationalization is that it enables the university to concentrate its efforts and its resources on clearly defined objectives, thus increasing their potential impact. It also enhances the role of the university with regard to broader community concerns, by demonstrating responsiveness to the needs of its immediate environment. It has often been emphasized that the process of European political and economic integration must be accompanied by a re-appreciation of the concept of the region at the level of policy and decision-making at which integration is "enacted." The establishment of trans-border cooperation with neighboring universities in Dresden and Liberec could provide the UW with the opportunity to be in the vanguard of this process of regionalization. At the same time, it could attract additional support for the universities involved, since the development of closer relations between Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic is an issue of considerable political importance.

7. European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)

The original and still valid argument behind introduction and use of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) is the promotion of international studies and programs through a common agreement on the transfer of academic credits between participating universities, mainly within the European Union. The ECTS scheme allows the acquired “credits” earned in one university to be validated/transferred to foreign institutions. The ECTS scheme enjoys strong political backing, especially in the European Union. In view of the forthcoming Polish integration into the European Union, higher education institutions in Poland must see the introduction of the ECTS as an opportunity to accelerate its integration into the emerging “open European area for higher learning.” The visiting team is aware that the dimension of change implied by full-scale adoption of ECTS could result in hesitancy. However, the benefits of the scheme reach beyond the issue of international student mobility. Indeed, it offers flexibility in the organization and pace of the studies, including post-graduate studies and professional development courses. The ECTS allows the institution to offer greater diversity of programs, as well as opportunities for interdisciplinary studies.

Final Remarks and Conclusion

This report should be viewed with the objectives of the **Universities Project** of the **Salzburg Seminar** in mind: to assist through the exchange of views, experiences and ideas, the complex process of higher education reform in Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States (NIS). It represents mutual long-term commitment on the part of advisors and host institutions which goes beyond a term of office of the governing bodies of a given institution, to search for improvements in governance, institutional structures, management, administration, finance, and international co-operation. The advisors hope that their thoughts might prove useful in view of the ongoing efforts of Wroclaw University to strengthen its academic profile as well as to improve its internal and external relations.

The world of higher education is undergoing intellectual, cultural and academic transformations. All universities aspiring to promote excellence in teaching and research—and the UW has both the ambition and potential to do so—require a center able to develop and gain support for such a vision. The visiting team believes that despite objective constraints and the inevitable plurality of views about specific issues and possible solutions, the current leadership of the UW has demonstrated a respect for the broad-minded culture of academic governance and has been successful in steering the university along the proper course.

The visiting team is very much aware that the observations and suggestions it offers are necessarily based on impressions and inferences drawn from the three-day consultation. But in the spirit of the Visiting Advisors Program, it is hoped that this visit is part of a two-way relationship with the UW. Thus the advisors would welcome feedback on the visit and the report with the Salzburg Seminar.

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

While specific institutional reforms undoubtedly vary from country to country, in all cases 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. In addition, the Project seeks to encourage the creation of networks among senior administrators of higher education institutions.

To further these goals, the Universities Project is developing a significant electronic dimension. Through the established technological resources of the American Studies Center, the Project is exploring ways in which the conferences and symposia can be made available to the benefit of a larger audience.

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 1999, approximately sixteen VAP visits will have taken place, twelve to universities in East and Central Europe, and four to Russian universities. A full schedule of visits is planned for 2000.

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For More Information

For more information regarding the Salzburg Seminar's Visiting Advisors Program, the University 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 83983
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