IU, Hong Kong Universities Consult on Management Style

What do eight public universities in Hong Kong have in common with Indiana University?

Hong Kong's public universities, like IU, face decreasing levels of state support for higher education. Coupled with a deepening recession and loss of revenues to public coffers, Hong Kong universities are facing an era of retrenchment after a 15-year period of remarkable growth.

This led a group of chief financial officers (CFOs) from six of Hong Kong's public universities to visit IU, the University of Southern California, and the University of Pennsylvania in March 1998. The CFOs were directed to IU because of IU's 10-year experience with Responsibility Center Management (RCM).

The eight Hong Kong universities involved in exploring RCM included: Chinese University, City University, Baptist University, the Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong University, the University of Science and Technology, Lingnan College, and Polytechnic University.

While the CFOs were in Bloomington, Maynard Thompson, vice chancellor and dean for budgetary administration (IUB), and the IU Office of International Programs (OIP) organized a day-long seminar on RCM that included deans, chairs and senior administrators.

As a result of their IU visit, the CFO's invited IU to submit a proposal for a six-month consulting project to be funded by Hong Kong's University Grants Council. In May, OIP's proposal was selected over five others.

OIP's Charles Reafsnyder, associate dean and director of the Center for International Education and Development Assistance, managed the resulting project for IU. Mr. James Ng, vice president for business and finance and Ms. Maggie Chau, associate director of business and finance, both of the City University of Hong Kong, directed the project for the Hong Kong RCM Task Force.

The first part of IU's RCM consulting project began with consultants visiting Hong Kong to interview key administrators at each of the eight public universities. The IU team was comprised of James Perin, assistant vice president for the university budget (IUB); Patrick Rooney, special assistant to the IUPUI Chancellor; Douglas Priest, associate vice chancellor for budgetary administration (IUB); James Buher, director of administrative services, School of Public and Environmental Affairs (IUB); and Colin Harris,
head of libraries, Metropolitan Manchester University (UK).

Harris has written and consulted on "devolved budgeting" systems in the United Kingdom. Given that universities in Hong Kong are patterned on the British higher education system, Dr. Harris brought a valuable Commonwealth perspective to the IU team.

The initial phase of the project, which included interviews with over 40 senior administrators, produced important data on the existing infrastructure. In addition, key differences were revealed between Hong Kong and U.S. universities which might bear upon developments in the British higher education system. In this context, Dr. Harris brought a balanced perspective of the merits of devolved budgeting systems. Nevertheless, one derivative of RCM, a "space allocation model" drew considerable interest among the participating universities because of the space constraints that universities must operate under in Hong Kong.

During both visits to Hong Kong, the RCM Task Force extended superb hospitality to the visiting members of the IU team. The IU participants also came away impressed with the energy and resources present at Hong Kong's public universities, and with their genuine desire to establish closer relations with IU and other U.S. universities.

Charles Reafsnyder

SPEA Receives Grant to Launch MPA Program in Azerbaijan

The SPEA project is co-directed by Professor Baker and David Jones, SPEA's director of professional graduate programs. SPEA's successful proposal to fund an exchange of faculty between Indiana University (IU) and Western to design and develop a Master's in Public Administration (MPA) program that will be up and running by the end of the three-year period, the SPEA project will commence in March, starts with that team spending a semester at SPEA. During that time they will visit several of the SPEA campuses, including South Bend and Indianapolis, to consider what is appropriate in terms of the orientation and content of this professional degree. Following that, faculty members from SPEA will travel to Baku to help in the design stage, and to launch some of the first offerings of the component courses.

IU has an impressive history of involvement in the Central Asian area, and the Azeri language is taught on the Bloomington campus. SPEA also has been involved in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. Currently SPEA has a joint MPA program with Central Eurasian Studies for returned Peace Corps volunteers.

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