S
ince 1999, Indiana University has been engaged in helping to expand higher education administration and curriculum reform at Taraz State University (TarSU), one of Kazakhstan’s newest universities. Established in 1998 through the restructuring of three existing institutions, it now boasts a faculty of 1,000 instructors and professors and a student body of 17,000, making it one of the largest universities in the country.

Kazakhstan is the second largest of the post-Soviet republics, with a population of some 17 million, almost half of which are ethnic Kazakhs, and is rich in natural and mineral resources. Along with other reforms that are taking place in the society is the restructuring of its higher educational system toward U.S. models. The IU–TarSU linkage is part of that effort, and it is a project of particular interest to Kazakhstan’s Ministry of Higher Education and Science. Funding for the project comes from a U.S. Department of State linkage grant of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

In October 2003, TarSU’s top administrator, Rector Abdimanap Bekturganov, came for a two-week visit to the Bloomington campus as part of the exchange and to formally sign the linkage agreement. He paid his respects to IU’s new president, Adam W. Herbert, and presented him with TarSU’s academic robe, normally reserved for members of the university’s Scientific Council. Bekturganov stressed that “the education of young people, giving them all the necessary skills, is the most important contribution we can make for the future of our Republic. . . . The economic growth of Kazakhstan is not possible without effective educational scientific centers such as TarSU.”

The rector was accompanied by Tursynaly Tuleyev, director of information technology, and Aida Sagintayeva, director of the Office of International Cooperation. Sagintayeva earned the equivalent of a Ph.D. (in English) under the old Soviet educational system, but she is busy spending two and a half months on campus learning all about the U.S. credit-hour system and various degree programs, their requirements, and their administrative processes. TarSU’s goal is to make their educational structures more comparable to modern systems and standards, thereby serving as a model that can be extended to reform other institutions of higher education in Kazakhstan.

Earlier in April 2003, Sagintayeva accompanied three other TarSU administrators and faculty to IUB. These were Fatima Zhakypova, vice rector at TarSU, and Sergey Tsoy, and
Long-Term Study of Humans and Deforestation in Amazon Basin Gets New Funding

A long-term study of human population and deforestation in the dwindling Amazon rainforest, conducted by anthropologist Emilio Moran and his colleagues at Indiana University Bloomington, is continuing with the support of a new $1.63 million, four-year grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Among its goals, the comprehensive study of 952 households will determine how farming strategies change with each generation and how human characteristics such as age, gender, education, and the use of financial credit influence rates of deforestation in the Amazon Basin.

“How quickly second and third generations learn to conserve forests on their land is of critical importance in predicting how much rainforest will remain standing,” says Moran, James H. Rudy Professor of Anthropology and director of the Anthropological Center for Training and Research on Global Environmental Change (ACT). “What we’d like to know is, does the next generation of farmers and workers have a less steep learning curve? The answer to this question will be extremely useful to local people as well as Brazilian policy makers and educators.”

The new study represents phase two of a long-term study for which Moran and his team have already surveyed 402 households and 3,800 square kilometers of land along the Brazilian Amazon frontier. In a previous study, Moran and colleagues showed that some characteristics of first-generation farmers and workers are indeed related to higher or lower rates of deforestation. This second phase of the project will follow children and grandchildren of the previously studied frontier settlers.

–David Bricker
IU Media Relations

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Elmira Faizova, two professors in the Faculty of Economics and Business. Since the linkage began, nine people from TarSU have come to IU. On the IU side of the exchange, traveling to TarSU most recently have been retired business professor Joseph Miller, who spent part of summer 2003 giving lectures and supervising diploma projects, and Robert Harris, director of IUPUI’s Center for Economic Education, who participated in evaluation and assessment activities there.

For further information on the linkage, contact Shawn Reynolds, associate director of the Center for International Education and Development Assistance; telephone: (812) 856-5861; e-mail: shreynol@indiana.edu.

–RMN

(Left to right) Sergey Tsay, Elmira Faizova, Fatima Zhakypova, and Aida Sagintayeva present a handwoven rug with “IU” and “TSU” logos to Dean for International Programs Patrick O’Meara.