IU Manages $15 Million Endowment for American University of Central Asia

The recent pro-democracy revolution in Kyrgyzstan turned world attention to this small Central Asian nation. One institution is already in place in the capital city of Bishkek that is certain to improve the nation's chances of making a successful transition to democracy—the American University of Central Asia (AUCA). Indiana University is integrally involved in those efforts.

AUCA, which currently enrolls some 1,100 students, has been closely involved in scholarly exchanges with IU since 1999. IU's Office of International Programs (OIP) was awarded a $1.9 million linkage grant from the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The project included IU and member colleges and universities of the Indiana Consortium for International Programs. ECA awarded IU and ICIP a $650,000 follow-on grant in 2003. In 2002, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) approached IU with a request to manage an endowment for AUCA. Having made substantial investments in AUCA over the years, USAID and the Open Society Institute (OSI), founded by philanthropist George Soros, wanted to institutionalize their commitments through an endowment.

In April 2005, the IU–AUCA relationship was strengthened with

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SPEA Establishes Public Administration Minor at AUCA

Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs has received a two-year grant funded by the Association Liaison Office (ALO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The grant will allow SPEA to partner with the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) in Kyrgyzstan and establish a basic undergraduate minor in public administration. The minor will enhance AUCA's capacity to prepare leaders and administrators for regional and local government service as well as to train future non-governmental (NGO) managers. The grant will produce a long-term, sustainable curriculum of five courses (15 credit hours) adapted to the needs of Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. The end product of the two-year partnership will be a public administration curriculum and minor field focused on three tracks: NGO track, public policy track, and the economics/finance track. The eventual goal of AUCA is to develop a graduate program in public policy and public affairs.

This curriculum should help improve managerial efficiency in Kyrgyz public institutions and NGOs while promoting democratic values and new approaches to public administration in the Central Asian

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the announcement that IU would receive a $15 million grant to establish an endowment fund for AUCA. The USAID will provide $10 million, and the OSI will provide the balance. The endowment's financial assets will be managed by the Indiana University Foundation and will help to underwrite AUCA's operational costs. The new agreements will establish the legal, administrative, and financial components of the endowment for a period of five years, with the possibility of a renewal for an additional five years.

In June, an OIP delegation comprising Patrick O'Meara, dean for international programs; Charles Reafsnyder, associate dean; Judith Rice, assistant dean for administration; and Shawn Reynolds, associate director for the Center for International Education and Development Assistance (CIDEA), traveled to Bishkek to work out the formalities for managing the endowment. AUCA expects to establish its own foundation in the United States and assume responsibility for management of funds from the newly established endowment. Until then, an advisory board will guide the distribution of funds. The board includes John O'Keefe, former U.S. ambassador to Kyrgyzstan; William Newton-Smith, chair of the OSI subcommittee on education; Cliff Brown, USAID country representative to Kyrgyzstan; AUCA President Ellen Hurwitz; two at-large members; and representatives from IU.

The IU banner hanging in the main entranceway to AUCA signifies the close collaboration between the two institutions. President Hurwitz underscored the importance of that relationship: "Recent events in Kyrgyzstan motivate us to charge ahead aggressively in developing long-term financial independence. We are profoundly grateful to our partners who recognize our strategic value and who champion our cause."

Housed in a building that once was the home of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, AUCA students are studying business administration, economics, journalism, and Western legal and political systems. Some are working toward master's degrees in business administration. Just a short walk from the Parliament building where throngs of democracy supporters forced the ouster of President Askar Akayev in March, these students are learning everything they will need to establish a democratic government, the rule of law, and a free-market economy. Many AUCA faculty and students are actively contributing to the democratic transformation taking place in Kyrgyzstan as journalists and political activists and through work in nongovernmental organizations.

AUCA courses are taught in English by professors who have studied in the United States or who have benefited from exchange visits by U.S. educators. Over the past five years, more than 35 AUCA faculty and administrators have visited IU’s Bloomington campus or other higher education institutions in the state. Nearly 40 faculty members from IU and other institutions have spent time with their counterparts in Bishkek. In the last few years, 19 AUCA junior faculty have received master's degrees at IU Bloomington, IUPUI, and Ball State University. DePauw University in Greencastle, Indiana, has provided much of the administrative training for AUCA administrative staff.

O'Meara says AUCA is unlike any other university in Central Asia. "It is the first and only institution of higher education in the region that operates according to the U.S. model with a credit-hour system, a U.S.-style curriculum, and a commitment to academic integrity and honesty. If IU wants to have an impact on the world, we have to be ready to support such efforts." He said the grant will enable IU to help AUCA promote diversity and transparency in their operations and improve the quality of their academic programs.