

September 18, 2004

To: Professor Samuel Andoh

From: Bijan Fazlollahi

Subject: Review of the Second Year Progress Report (2003- 2004)
Linkage between SCSU and KU

This report is based on the study of second year progress report and its attachments.

During the second year the project made significant progress building on its first year positive results. The second year activities focused on curriculum and course development, faculty development and training, and acquisition of computers and text books.

The total curriculum hours and its segmentation are within accepted norms. The addition of the Production and Operation Management course is in line with the needs of Azerbaijan as most likely jobs for the graduates of the program are in operations of construction, oil, and services industries. The addition of a course dealing with ethics is also necessary as the Caucasus societies are currently deeply immersed in corruption. The inclusion of the course International Business is appropriate as oil rich Azerbaijan increasingly experiences the forces of globalization.

The increase in the proportion and number of electives adds flexibility and ensures that students graduate in time. This strategy takes into account the realities of the hot market for English speaking business graduates that influence Khazar and other private universities to rely on part timers and expatriates to teach their courses. However, relying on adjunct faculty to institutionalize the new undergraduate program and modern teaching and research management know-how may be unrealistic. It would be difficult to ensure consistency of course contents and quality of instruction for each offering of the course. It is also unlikely that adjunct professors will engage in research in any significant way.

The Course Syllabi reflect the objectives of the undergraduate program. It is impressive that each Khazar faculty member directly participated in developing his/her own course syllabus. This should improve the implementation of the undergraduate program as the faculty will feel a sense of ownership. Khazar should ensure that each syllabus contains the course number as well as course name.

Faculty development and training activities have achieved remarkable results. A total of four Khazar faculty members (3 female and one male) plus two administrators visited SCSU in Connecticut. The Khazar faculty attended classes in several different courses and thereby exposed themselves to different teaching styles and acquired the basis for comparison of different styles in multiple contexts. This method has communicated the fact that there is more than one effective way to teach. Assigning each visitor a mentor

ensured that they received the most out of their relatively short visits. Generally, visiting the United States and observing the daily life on and off campus makes a life time impression on visitors from Azerbaijan. The visitors were impressed to observe the student services provided by SCSU and one of them is already thinking about reforms at Khazar. Making presentations to American audiences and attending faculty meetings at SCSU made the Azeri faculty feel important, self-confident, and empowered to bring about change upon return home. The fact that one of the visitors was given the chance to teach a class at SCSU on her own significantly contributed to her development. The likelihood that the SCSU community will continue to mentor the Azeri faculty beyond the period of the grant will help the Azeri faculty stay informed of the changes in the field.

SCSU has benefited from the project through internationalization of their faculty and students. The American Project managers made multiple visits to Azerbaijan and gained in-depth knowledge of the political, economic, cultural and educational environment in Azerbaijan. The ongoing collaborative research projects are indicative of the deeper understanding and higher interest in issues of Azerbaijan and NIS. The research on cultural attitudes towards women in management has the potential to be extended to other countries of the Caucasus. The visit of the Azeri Faculty to SCSU and participation in classes as well as social interaction with American faculty and students has also enriched the knowledge of everyone involved. Given the fact that Azerbaijan is a Moslem country, these visits have a special significance nowadays.

A limited number of textbooks were provided to Khazar library at the rate of introduction of new courses. Khazar has one of the best libraries in the Southern Caucasus. Rector Hamlet Issakhanly has made the library at Khazar the center piece of his university. Thus any books and reference material supplied to Khazar is likely to be safe and put to good use. Generally the students attending the course borrow and use the books during the semester. It is also necessary to obtain Instructor manuals for the textbooks for the use of faculty and keep them in the library because of the adjunct nature of the faculty. Given the limited amount of funds available for books, it may be more appropriate to seek old edition donated books from publishers through organizations such as the Sabre Foundation and use the available funds to pay for ground transportation.

The achievement of the project in providing computer laboratory facilities is also remarkable. Student access to computers and Internet has improved this year.

Concluding the project implementation with a seminar, as suggested, is an effective strategy to communicate the significant accomplishments to the parents, the educational community, and the donors. Parents are very important as they pay almost all the tuition of the undergraduate students. Presentation of some research results in this seminar by Azeri faculty would be most useful. Generally lower level employees do not get to talk in gatherings where higher-ups are present.

Finally, I would like to add a few comments on the merits of hiring more full-time faculty. The institutionalization of the undergraduate program and teaching and research reforms require the services of full time faculty and administrators. Currently, Professor Mahammad Nouriev is the force that keeps it all together. The Project Directors seem to have resigned to the fact that “Khazar..... is going to continue to be dependent on adjunct faculty because the people most qualified to teach business courses are also attracted by better offers from the private sector.” However, full time faculty members with terminal degrees and deep knowledge in each segment of the curriculum are needed to bring a sense of ownership to the program and ensure long term academic sustainability. Full time faculty members are more likely to pursue update of the curriculum and their own expertise in the field as the world, Azerbaijan, and Khazar change around them. Full time faculty are also necessary if any decision making regarding curriculum and other matters of governance of the SME is to be delegated to faculty. It is crucial to keep a core of permanent faculty to safe guard the know-how in the school. Khazar should invest in their permanent business faculty because it is a good investment. At a minimum Khazar university should hire the core faculty as full time. There was a time when Khazar through first mover advantage was the only game in town in business education. The business education market is competitive and other programs have sprung up in the past few years and other will follow. A core of full time faculty is crucial for Khazar to remain competitive. Furthermore, to achieve accreditation, for example CEEMAN accreditation, SME must develop its core of fulltime faculty and pursue scholarly work to qualify.