



## **The Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar Visiting Advisors Program**

### **Report of the Visit to Academia Istropolitana Nova Bratislava, Slovak Republic May 26–28, 2003**

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#### **Foreword**

1. As a part of Salzburg Seminar's Universities Project, the Visiting Advisors Program (VAP) offers assistance to higher education institutions (HEI) in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the Russian Federation which seek to advance the process of institutional self-assessment and change. The VAP consists of consulting visits, at the request of the host institution, by an international team of experienced university leaders who volunteer their time and expertise to provide strategic support and advice to their colleagues in developing new approaches to concerns expressed by the host institution. In doing so, the Salzburg Seminar hopes to promote a broader understanding of the challenges that HEI in the respective regions are facing in renewing their higher education systems; to share examples of good practice; to strengthen the reform impetus at the given HEI; and to encourage professional and institutional linkages.
2. The Universities Project received an invitation to send a Visiting Advisor Team to the Academia Istropolitana Nova (AI Nova) institution in Svaty Jur near Bratislava in the Slovak Republic, and the visit took place May 26–28, 2003. AI Nova is a very small, independent, non-governmental institution established as a civic association in 1996. Its goal is to provide specialized postgraduate education in the fields related to societal transformation, to regional development, and to integration within the European Union, at a level currently just below Masters. It prides itself on its innovative spirit and transitions, its international outlook and faculty, its proactive role within Slovak higher education, and its productive alliances with other HEI.
3. The activities of AI Nova have received generous financial support from many foreign donor organizations, including the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the Higher Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute, the Austrian government, the Volkswagen Foundation, the European Commission (Tempus, Phare, Socrates and Leonardo programs), USAID, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the British Council, the Hadley Trust, the Matra Program and the Slovak government itself.

4. At the time of the visit, AI Nova has been undertaking a re-appraisal of its role, activities and performance occasioned by several factors, including, *inter alia*:
  - 4.1 the advent of other providers into fields of study formerly tenanted more or less exclusively by AI Nova, i.e. competition;
  - 4.2 the natural reluctance of funding sponsors to continue to provide financial support on a semi-permanent basis;
  - 4.3 the corresponding need to diversify funding sources;
  - 4.4 the need to update program offerings in light of external developments (e.g. EU enlargement; the so-called “Bologna Process,” market shifts in terms of the popularity of courses and the need for different emphases;
  - 4.5 the growing maturity of AI Nova as an HEI and its recognition that a new stage in its development was necessary.
5. There has been particular impetus given to the above by the continuing dialogue with the Higher Education Support Program of the Open Society Institute, which led to the production of a Self Assessment Study by AI Nova in Spring 2002, and discussions which followed it. These particularly focused on the desirability of AI Nova producing a more detailed longer-term strategic plan, which would be strongly analytical, and propose definitive lines of development and new and amended activities with which sponsoring organizations could affiliate and lend support accordingly. This VAP visit is thus intended to help this process along by commenting on the Self Assessment, identifying gaps and proposing options for development.
6. In addition, another important factor has been the production of an introductory proposal to establish a Postgraduate Institute of Social Science for the Slovak Republic of AI Nova by a group of eminent academics from universities in the Slovak Republic and elsewhere (April 2003). This very interesting proposal, which we fully appreciate is in its early stages of development, has been discussed by the VAP Team with its authors, other Slovak colleagues and with the AI Nova staff.
7. AI Nova set up for the VAP Team a series of detailed and very helpful discussions over the three-day visit, which provided rich evidence and perspectives in addition to the documentation provided. The purpose of the Team’s visit was not to conduct formal evaluation of AI Nova, but to provide a vehicle for discussing matters of common interest within the framework of the policy debate described above. What we have attempted to do in this Report is to:
  - 7.1 provide a full and frank discussion of the issues presented to us, particularly drawing on international experience and perspectives;
  - 7.2 offer some fairly precise options for AI Nova to discuss with its various stakeholders and partners;
  - 7.3 indicate, where necessary, some detailed ways of proceeding in operational areas.

We trust that this may be of considerable use to the institution, and guide it to a new trajectory for the next stage in its development

In the Report, we look at the development of AI Nova in six main domains, and in each consider AI Nova as it is in the current frame, but also assess the ramifications of taking aboard the proposed Postgraduate Institute. We trust the analysis will be clear. Recommendations for action are indicated in emboldened print in the text.

8. At the outset, we would like to thank the Executive Director and her colleagues for their excellent hospitality – social, cultural, gastronomic and intellectual – their warm friendship and stimulating discussions.

### **Institutional Identity, Positioning and Status**

9. AI Nova's current position may be viewed along two dimensions:
  - 9.1 in terms of its academic level, where it is defined as a postgraduate school at "minimum Master's level," though not currently offering Master's degrees;
  - 9.2 in terms of its legal status, which is that of a civic association, designated as such by the Ministry of the Interior as a non profit NGO, and deriving its internal characteristics from its statutes (Board of Trustees; Executive Directors; eight departments etc.). This status also reflects an important part of the institutional history and self-image since its founding was an act of opposition against the seizure of AI Nova's predecessor institution ("Academia Istropolitana") by the authoritarian Slovak government at the time.

It follows that any discussion of its future development should first consider these two dimensions in terms of their utility, sustainability and relevance to changing environmental conditions.

10. The current position seems to be thus:
  - 10.1 As a civic association, it is removed from undue state interference in internal government, policy finance, salary conditions, or academic matters, which provides welcome autonomy and operational freedom.
  - 10.2 It does not receive any basic state funding, unlike Slovakian universities, so is in a very volatile situation financially.
  - 10.3 It does not possess full degree awarding rights, which prevents its full development as an HEI, and the recognition of its programs by the market is because of their intrinsic merit and value rather than because of given status or accreditation. In national and international higher education markets, (typified by Bologna processes, ECTS, etc.), this is likely to prove increasingly difficult in the future, both in terms of inter-institutional partnerships and student mobility.
  - 10.4 There is clearly much to be said for its niche position as a provider of quality, distinctive, innovative postgraduate education to bright recent graduates, but increasingly this will be subject to continent-wide definitions and rubrics as to what constitutes "postgraduateness," and especially what constitutes a Master's degree (though admittedly, post Bologna discussions have not yet revealed any hard consensus on the details of either, and especially whether a Master's is a taught or research degree). The present status of the AI Nova Diploma is thus potentially vulnerable in these terms.
  - 10.5 The above factors could unnecessarily cap its future growth potential.

- 10.6 As an NGO, it can participate in EU funding, as long as project-related conditions can be met.

The sum total of the above thus seems to indicate a reasonably autonomous existence, but with shrinking boundaries of real freedom and discretion.

11. Identity can also be considered in terms of stakeholder and market perceptions, as distinct from legal identity. Some brainstorming with AI Nova staff, students and external colleagues seemed to generate broad agreement on the following properties which characterized AI Nova:

- 11.1 an independent, flexible institution;
- 11.2 not for profit, and with a caring culture;
- 11.3 academically good through the use of internationally excellent faculty;
- 11.4 up-to-date and relevant: multi-lingual and offering a window on the international world;
- 11.5 innovative in terms of curriculum areas, new technology, and effective in creating individual approaches and critical thinking;
- 11.6 well resourced, especially in the library.

These properties are rather important in terms of

- **public image and marketing for students and business,**
- **differentiation with public providers,**
- **emphasising the “small is beautiful” ethos, which needs to be preserved – possibly slightly elitist, but not in any negative way.**

12. Notwithstanding the above, the VAP Team is concerned at the absence of a growth trajectory at AI Nova, which it considers to be potentially fatal in a fast-changing environment where other HEI are moving into markets and areas of course provision which AI Nova initiated – often the fate of the pioneer. Indeed, one program area has been suspended for the time being. The question is therefore: where should any expansion come from? This is addressed in more detail in the following main section on Academic Profile, but in broad terms the possibilities the VAP Team recommends are:

- 12.1 **Converting the Diploma into a postgraduate Diploma linked Master’s as the Bologna model (which is already happening in some countries).**
- 12.2 **Adding new program specialisms in fields of emerging academic and employment interest, particularly in relation to the expanded EU and related accession issues.**
- 12.3 **Offering programs on a part-time as well as full-time basis, to pick up the mature, continuing education and lifelong learning markets in an innovative manner, which presumes credit-based programs, to facilitate credit transfer and accumulations and that would also open up fresh income stances, which AI Nova seriously needs.**

The above require innovation and flexibility, which AI Nova has amply demonstrated in the past, and which many more traditional state HEI do not. The titling of the AI Nova library as the “Popper Library” should provide considerable insights as to what the philosophic basis of future research and pedagogy should be. The drive to become a somewhat larger institution should provide the basis for a stronger research critical mass, which is a pre-requisite for a postgraduate institute of the twenty-first century.

There are a number of possible lines of major development of AI Nova in terms of status, and to these we now turn.

13. The first would be to retain the status of the Civic Association, and largely continue as before. This is not considered by the VAP Team to be a feasible option, given the turbulence of the contemporary higher education scene.
14. The second would be to continue as a civic association but with formal accreditation from another agency to legitimize the quality of the existing and future programs. The VAP Team **feels this is an important advance**, and understands that possibilities so far identified include Comenius University, the UK Open University, and The Central European University. However, there are certainly several other candidates in North America and UK (e.g. Warwick, Lancaster, LSE, Strathclyde). It is not for the Team to propose a single one, but **we do recommend certain criteria which should be applied to each possibility in a rigorous and systematic way before making a final choice, namely:**
  - 14.1 **Would the relationship be a genuine academic partnership aimed at development, or one of academic domination and control?**
  - 14.2 **What is the legitimacy of the University in the regional and international market?**
  - 14.3 **Are the accreditation and ongoing operational processes likely to be cumbersome, bureaucratic and time-consuming, or flexible and supportive?**
  - 14.4 **What would be the lead time for securing accreditation?**
  - 14.5 **Is the institution likely to be sensitive to the particular circumstances of AI Nova, and to facilitate the development of innovative and relevant programs consistent with AI Nova’s mission? Would it insist on unreasonable conditions, e.g. limited use of part-time staff?**
  - 14.6 **Would the arrangement facilitate direct connections with related departments in the accrediting university, thus facilitating unexpected spin-offs, and joint projects?**
  - 14.7 **Would the accreditation be of AI Nova as a whole, enabling it to develop courses subsequently on a relatively autonomous basis; or would accreditation be for each separate program; or a combination of the two?**
  - 14.8 **What would be the costs of the initial process and ongoing relationships?**

**The Team also strongly recommends that AI Nova pays particular attention at an early date to critical elements which any accrediting institution would be likely to assess. These include, *inter alia*:**

- a clear academic strategy,
- a robust quality assurance regime,
- a systematic staff development and human resource strategy,
- good quality programs,
- good levels of graduate employment,
- an Academic Council to supervise standards.

**Some preparatory work on some of these is clearly necessary now.**

**The Team offers its services if AI Nova felt that a pilot simulation of an accreditation visit would be helpful.**

15. The third possibility would be to become an associate center/subset of an existing Central European university, such as Comenius or the Central European University, possibly as a postgraduate school. This would mean, presumably, either a role and curriculum offerings differentiated from those delivered by the main institution, or a parallel operation. Some discussions with colleagues at Comenius indicated an interest in enabling AI Nova to offer the Comenius Master's degree in Applied Economics and European Studies, for instance, with some permissible variants within a broad frame. This was perceived as offering benefits to:
  - 15.1 Comenius, in terms of access to AI Nova's Continuing Professional Development program and English expertise, international contacts, library and student network;
  - 15.2 AI Nova, in terms of accreditation and legitimacy and the possibilities of joint research, access to a larger academic community, etc.

The Team remained ambivalent on this alternative, since several state universities are not noted for their flexibility and innovation; AI Nova could be dominated, leading to the possibility of eventual absorption. The Team did not see its role as being an agent in AI Nova's youthful demise, and **recommends great care in relation to this option**. However, if it were to consider this possibility as a longer-term option, certain characteristics of the current AI Nova profile (appeal to international students, flexibility, alternative approaches to pedagogy etc.) should be preserved, possibly by creating an apposite governance structure that supports this profile.

16. The fourth possibility for development is encapsulated in the proposal to establish a Postgraduate Institute of Social Sciences for the Slovak Republic at AI Nova (paper of April 2003 from J. Horvath, J. and J. Fidrmuc, D. Malová and K. Maternová, with additional contributions from L. Bruszt and J. Pisut). This very interesting proposal stems from a serious concern at the poor position of social science research and researchers in the Slovak Republic, in terms of academic output in international publications; a brain drain of talented undergraduates to study at postgraduate level in the Czech Republic and elsewhere; a brain drain of faculty; a lack of exposure to western social science expertise. The part solution is held to be the establishment of

a top-quality western-style research center at AI Nova, based on two departments of Political Science and Economics, each housing an M.A. degree. On this interesting proposal, the VAP Team offers the following observations/recommendations:

- 16.1 The proposal offers AI Nova **the potential of a new development trajectory; a means of enlargement; and a market positioning which would be quite distinctive.**
- 16.2 It is an ambitious plan which would hold promise for considerable national, regional and international business at Master's level, **assuming the new programs were cast in the Bologna mode.**
- 16.3 As described in the proposal, the programs do not seem to the VAP Team to be particularly innovative, in terms of content and on pedagogy, though, they are clearly academically sound. The goal of preparing candidates for high office in the Slovak public and private sectors (which is excellent) **could be imaginatively achieved by other models of Master's degrees on which the VAP Team would be pleased to provide detailed elaboration, but would include:**
  - **more interdisciplinary study;**
  - **Popperian methodologies, including action learning and research;**
  - **internships and placements;**
  - **international experience.**
- 16.4 Though the proposal is aimed at improving Slovakian Social Science research, it does not encompass a doctorate – at least in the first instance. This ought to figure in plans for the medium term.
- 16.5 The proposal is phrased as a more or less self-contained addition to AI Nova, about which the VAP Team is concerned. Given the size of AI Nova, the nature of the existing program, and the financial fragility of the proposals, **we would recommend a much closer integration in relation to**
  - **academic matters: redesigned AI Nova Diplomas should lead on naturally to appropriate Master's programs;**
  - **administrative integration: for economies of scale;**
  - **quality assurance;**
  - **financial support and cross-subsidy as appropriate from time to time;**
  - **government (Trustees) and academic policy making (an Academic Council);**
  - **exposing the Master's to the AI Nova innovative spirit.**
- 16.6 We consider this integration to be important also to make subsequent asset-stripping much more difficult for once AI Nova had successfully incubated the

programs. **There are a range of different models of integration/affiliation which could be considered to preserve the overall integrity of AI Nova,** whilst at the same time providing a strong public visibility for the Master's and research activities. This issue is returned to in paragraph 54

- 16.7 The financial proposals are still at an early stage, and **we would welcome/recommend further detailed consideration and amplification in the light of the above**, with a view to
- more realistic costing,
  - proper fee levels (since this is supposed to be a prestigious program for “high fliers”). Financial sustainability is not yet proven.
- 16.8 Accreditation would still have to be obtained for these new programs associated with the Postgraduate Institute, along the lines discussed earlier, but also for AI Nova's existing continuing education program, as indicated in the Self Assessment.
- 16.9 We consider it vital to set aside a year for detailed feasibility studies and, if favorable, for preparation for setting up the Postgraduate Institute, in order to ensure a very thorough process of development and implementation.
17. A number of possibilities are thus available, for the consideration of AI Nova and its affiliates and sponsors. Generally, the Team would incline towards a combination of possibilities 2 and 4 (paragraphs 14 and 16 above) but would strongly recommend that AI Nova apply for a planning grant from HESP, TEMPUS or similar agency to do a detailed feasibility study and risk assessment of both possibilities at an early date.

### **Academic Profile**

18. AI Nova is a relatively new institution, and its Statement of Mission in 1996 and 1998 indicates the priorities as being the provision of a “liberal professional education in selected fields relevant to societies in transformation.” This is further elaborated in terms of social need; inter-disciplinarity; internationalization and cooperation; high standards; flexibility and vitality; and of operational values, felt to be appropriate to a postgraduate professional school. EU integration has emerged as a philosophical and operational theme in recent years. To give effect to these, the program portfolio of AI Nova has encompassed
- 18.1 full time Diploma specializations in Architecture Conservation/Built Heritage Development (AC/BHD); Environmental Policy (EP); European Studies (ES); Applied Economics (PPAEF); Journalism (suspended 2002 – 3);
- 18.2 in-service training, including continuing education, summer schools; Professional Communication and English (PCEP); Public Policy (PPP); Open, Distance and Vocational Learning Program (ODVL);
- 18.3 public service activity (consultancy for national and local clients, based on knowledge transfer of international know-how);
- 18.4 research.

For a small HEI with a small core staff, this constitutes a very reasonable set of offerings to date, for which AI Nova should be commended in principle.



19. As far as the Diploma specializations are concerned, the Team offers the following observations:
- 19.1 The Self Assessment Study of 2002 that was prepared for HESP outlines so-called “outputs,” student related competencies, which form a conceptual backcloth for the specializations. The VAP Team recommends that
- **these should be reappraised and updated. There are now likely to be additional competencies,**
  - **they should be systematically applied as a template to all specializations and any gaps remedied,**
  - **whilst many of these are best delivered in the particular context of the particular specialization, some may be more effectively delivered as institute-wide common modules.**
- 19.2 The ratio of applicants to registered accepted students is not as favorable as it might be, and this probably calls for enhanced marketing **efforts to broaden the popularity and choice; and, more fundamentally, consideration on whether particular programs need updating or re-branding or replacing.**
- 19.3 The ratio of graduates to registered students varies across programs and across years, but a range of 55 – 65% completion is slightly worrying. This may reflect the nature of the intake in the first instance (see 19.2 above), but also the integrity of the assessment process, which looks quite sound.
- 19.4 The Diploma specializations are conceded as being somewhat “silo-like,” but proposals for introducing more integration are presently being considered.
- 19.5 Although each specialization produces an annual assessment that is undertaken seriously, taking account of student opinion, and improvements in process are discernible, we do not see an overt self-evaluation process as is typical of quality regimes in many other HEI with
- common overarching criteria,
  - common framework,
  - links to a planning cycle and academic renewal processes.
- This aspect should be picked up in the near future, since it will surely be looked at by any accreditation body.
20. The VAP Team was interested in obtaining a feel for the nature of the student learning experience at AI Nova, especially in light of the distinctive character and origins of the institution. We held an in-depth discussion with approximately 10% of the student body, drawn from the various programs and CEE countries. We wish to compliment the students for very perceptive and helpful observations, and AI Nova for providing for them with what is a well-regarded experience. The following points emerge as important in the context of our review:

- 20.1 The reasons that students come to AI Nova in the first place include:
- strong recommendations from alumni or a previous educational institution;
  - the niche areas of study offered by AI Nova;
  - the innovative nature of the program;
  - the institutional dimension and English-speaking focus;
  - that it offers a good bridge between initial qualifications and the job market.
- 20.2 There are many positive aspects of the learning experience, which, in practice, reinforced the above, including:
- sharply focused, well prepared lectures delivered by a variety of good professors with different approaches to teaching and learning and who bring fresh international and comparative perspectives;
  - a tough working schedule, with free time requiring significant personal planning, especially for student seminar presentations, personal research projects, etc;
  - excellent library support and field excursions;
  - good access to teachers, including those from abroad, via email linkages;
  - a small, international student body (though it could be expanded to give additional richness);
  - teaching in English.
- 20.3 Areas for improvement suggested by students include:
- more students from western countries and field visits to Western Europe;
  - resolution of visa problems with some countries;
  - discouragement of the use of the Slovak language;
  - more scholarship provision;
  - consistency in the quality of lectures (occasionally there is too quick a turnaround of lectures) and teaching standards (very occasionally, a lecturer will not arrive for a class);
  - living accommodation closer to the campus.
- 20.4 Of particular note was the observation that the non-accredited nature of the program did not detract from the employability of graduates, owing to the availability of Diploma transcripts; good references (often from eminent

tutors); the well-known nature of the program in CEE; the English language transmission. However, it was felt that accreditation could do no harm in the future, especially with regard to public sector employment, and in Western Europe and Central Asia.

In short, the views of the clients are strongly supportive of the nature of programs and the character of the institution, assets which AI Nova would be wise to maintain.

21. Regarding the in-service training and summer schools, conferences, etc., AI Nova has filled an important market niche in ways that are flexible in relation to the market groups concerned, and the VAP Team offers the following observations:

- 21.1 The in-service training pattern is patchy with no contributions 1997–2002 from Architectural Conservation, Environmental Policy, Journalism and Applied Economics and Finance, and in 2001–2 the entire provision was shared between ODVL and Public Policy. This distribution is unfortunate, since life-long learning and continuing professional education equally applies to these other areas. The same uneven distribution, though with different configurations also applies to short-term activities.
- 21.2 In-service training shows a 50% drop 2000–1 to 2001–2, which is potentially quite worrying, given the financial possibilities that exist.
- 21.3 There are clearly major training opportunities relating to EU enlargement for businessmen and civil servants, and AI Nova is well poised to make valuable contributions here, especially in collaboration with existing and new partners.

**The VAP Team recommends that AI Nova revisit this position.**

22. As was indicated in the section on Identity and Positioning (paragraphs 9–17), the VAP Team is concerned at the absence of a growth trajectory and a plan for the future development of the academic profile and portfolio. Various suggestions were offered, whilst maintaining the essential character of AI Nova as small, innovative, purposeful and caring. Here we reinforce this point by **recommending in terms of horizontal development:**

- 22.1 **a serious consideration of new lines of specialization related to transformation of societies – the subject of a much longer debate than we have time for;**
- 22.2 **the conversion of the entire Diploma program to a common credit/modular structure to facilitate**
- **student mobility,**
  - **credit accumulation and transfer,**
  - **reduction of duplication of courses across tracks,**
  - **the emergence of a core curriculum,**
  - **the addition of new specialisms using a combination of relevant existing and newly designed modules,**

- **mergers between program specializations where this makes sense (e.g. Environmental and European Studies).**
23. As far as vertical development is concerned, the proposed Post Graduate Institute would clearly alter, enrich and enlarge the academic profile. Its vitality, however, is likely to emerge more changed if connected in innovative ways to existing programs, rather than simply inserted as another layer. Here, we make the following observations and recommendations:
- 23.1 The two new Master's programs proposed are essentially single-discipline in nature, whereas the Diplomas are ostensibly much more multi-disciplinary. Given that the aim of the Master's is to train high flying practitioners (which implies training in policy analysis, change and transformation and policy/action research), a **more inter-disciplinary Master's program that draws heavily on strong, discipline-based analytical techniques and paradigms would seem to be more appropriate than just a very good higher academic program** (see paragraph 16.3).
- 23.2 There should be a clear means whereby students can progress from the Diploma to the new Master's, given appropriate levels of achievement on the former. Course designs should facilitate this wherever possible, including
- **curriculum renewal of the current Diploma and the design of new Diploma specializations to accommodate onward progression,**
  - **an adjustment of the title and content of proposed Master's degrees,**
  - **a consideration of where the Diploma specialisms on Architectural Heritage, Environmental Policy and Journalism may lead at Master's level.**
- 23.3 **The linkage of course design and redesign with the Bologna principles and rubric is clearly advantageous bearing in mind the**
- **international possibilities,**
  - **progression from Master's to doctorate,**
  - **likely pre-requisites of accreditation bodies.**

These are quite difficult issues, but the opportunities available are considerable if they are grasped.

24. Mention must be made here of the Library at AI Nova. We have found it, as have, apparently, others external to the institution, to be a rich resource for the AI Nova programs as well as for the intellectual and cultural development of its students and staff. This is an excellent example of a resource not only supporting the programs but also doing so in a way consistent with the culture and philosophy of the institution. The references here to the Library include such things as its holdings, media (or computer) centers, and its repositories of information or technological systems required for the support of institutional programs and offerings. In addition, AI Nova has the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that students use these resources as an integral part of their education.

25. Finally, we should here address the question of the strategic planning and associated issues of performance reviews and readjustment processes.

- 25.1 It is customary in any academic program review to measure the effectiveness of the institution as a whole by assessing

- whether there are clearly defined and stated purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning,
- whether it has assembled and organized the resources necessary to achieve its purposes,
- whether it *is* actually achieving its purposes,
- whether it has the ability to continue to achieve its purposes.

AI Nova's greatest challenge in this regard, it appears, lies in its ability to continue to achieve its purposes. Our review has detected that the history of AI Nova has involved the continuous challenge to maintain its philosophical and educational integrity while also sustaining its financial viability, and has had a fair measure of success in so doing.

- 25.2 Planning – strategic, financial, academic, capital, comprehensive – is what an institution does to ensure its ongoing vitality. During our program review process, it was evident that planning is valued and represented among the functions carried out routinely by the directors and the leadership, but probably more effective planning can be accomplished if there is a strategic focus yielding a greater coherence and more obvious connections among the various parts of the institution, rather than the more self-contained operations which appertain at present.

- 25.3 Program decisions should emerge from this kind of comprehensive planning that focuses on the institution – its mission and goals – rather than any one program *per se*. Planning includes routine assessment as well, allowing for the ongoing questions whose answers shape and strengthen the whole of the institution and its programs: What do the programs do? Why do they do what they do? What do they do well? What do they not do so well? How do they know? Ongoing assessments should also include a mechanism for testing the effect on students of a program's goal – the mastery of a complex field of study or professional area. What do the students do when they complete the program? These are among the planning questions that focus, ultimately, on the quality of what is intended. There are parts of the above that exist in AI Nova but the institution could benefit from bringing directors of AI Nova departments into a general cyclical framework.

- 25.4 In our discussions, there emerged evidence of the need for stronger academic supervision to be on firmer footing in such a decentralized environment. We would urge substantive academic perspectives in decisions about the design and execution of the curriculum – but appropriately in the context of the mission, purpose, and goals of AI Nova rather than solely or even primarily in the context of a particular discipline or set of disciplines. In specific terms, therefore we would urge

- a robust three year academic planning cycle for AI Nova as a whole, involving an institution-wide strategic plan based on whatever AI Nova

chooses to select from our suggestions and emerging environmental imperatives,

- an annual update of performance against these priorities by the departments and the Academic Council (which we propose later),
- tying in program evaluations and the budget into this process.

However, this should not be a gigantic bureaucratic exercise, but part of normal life. AI Nova is small enough to manage with a limited but effective process, which should also at a relevant point involve Trustees and stakeholders.

## **Research**

26. Since AI Nova declares itself to be a higher education institution (paragraphs 2.3 of the 2002 Self Assessment Study), a coherent research capability would seem to be a prerequisite for its long-term success. In 1998, A. Brunovská cited particularly the importance to AI Nova of

26.1 additional financial resources from research,

26.2 cross-departmental – interdisciplinary approaches,

26.3 Ph.D. programs and the attraction of young scholars.

27. Given the above, (and bearing in mind the size of AI Nova and the proportion of part-time lecturers), progress to date has been reasonable, encompassing, *inter alia*

27.1 work on three main topics: transformation process in societies; European integration; local development;

27.2 cooperation with local and regional interests, and with colleagues in other HEI;

27.3 progressive activities of young scholars;

27.4 some external contracts/support (e.g. Volkswagen Foundation);

27.5 courses on research methods do figure in the existing programs, leading in many cases to very good diploma projects;

though no research students *per se* are part of the current AI Nova portfolio.

28. However, it is not clear

28.1 how and whether the potential for staff research feeding into programs is realized at present;

28.2 what the precise published outputs of the thematic areas are, and whether these are, in fact, attributable to AI Nova or part-timers whose main allegiance is elsewhere;

28.3 whether AI Nova is able to raise a research community or even a few of the next generation of researchers under current arrangements;

28.4 whether significant cross-program/interdisciplinary research takes place;

28.5 what quality assurance mechanisms for research exist.

The above are very much a reflection of AI Nova's stage of development, and its profile to date.

29. The major question for AI Nova is how to progress from here in terms of research. Two obvious scenarios present themselves:

29.1 The first is developing research from the existing base, and here the main strategies would appear to be

- renewing the research themes, as the situation in Central and Eastern Europe evolves. Discussions with user organizations are critical to this renewal. It is probably the case that the existing topics have only a limited lifespan as circumstances change, and as other HEI enter these fields.
- accessing EU Framework Six funds – but this assumes very active inter-institutional partnerships for this purpose. Whether existing links with Limerick, Leiden and Cottibus are adequate for this purpose needs discussion.
- creating a Research Development Fund to stimulate and support initiatives: this may mean an institution-wide top-slice from program budgets.
- a generally more pro-active, institution-wide capacity for acquiring research funds beyond program level.
- systematizing the level, volume and sophistication of research training across the various Diploma specialisms e.g. institute-wide courses in research methods/project management, etc. (which would also have some financial advantages); and stimulating students not only to produce project reports, but publishable articles in joint authorship with staff.
- renewed partnerships with Comenius et al, to achieve a decent critical mass, accompanied by the recruitment of younger research staff with something to prove.

29.2 The second scenario depends on the establishment of the proposed Post Graduate Institute at AI Nova. As the proposal paper indicates, this is predicated on the assumption that

- the productivity of Slovak social science researchers is relatively low and predominantly local,
- most Slovak postgraduate students move outside Slovakia for their studies,
- there is a traditional brain drain problem,
- there is, therefore, the need for a top quality Slovak center.

All these points are, no doubt, very well made, and the proposal to set up two departments of political sciences and economics, with a strong research orientation, is seen as the way forward. However, two new Master's programs, *per se*, do not constitute a major research initiative, but may be a reasonable starting point.

29.3 The VAP Team would therefore recommend

- the design of a program structured on the Bologna model with a progressive movement through a Master's (research/enquiry based, not an extension of the taught undergraduate program) to the doctorate;
- quite clear and innovative research paradigms, with perhaps a strong policy or action research component, rather than a continuation of more traditional economic or political science research;
- the consideration of a part-time doctorate for practitioners in the public and private sectors, which would facilitate an action orientation and create a clear differentiation with other providers.

30. Scenarios one and two, of course, are not mutually exclusive, but the Post Graduate Institute would be a major step forward in AI Nova's research agendas, as long as it was viewed as a research initiative.

### **Finance and Resources**

31. As a civic association committed to educational activities on a not-for-profit principle, AI Nova has not been eligible for public support from Slovak sources. Instead, it has successfully managed to attract funding from international donors (see paragraph 3) based on project proposals. These include Mellon and USAID, but the American benevolence is diminishing as the accession countries join the EU. The HESP has been a significant benefactor, but we understand its continuation if it is predicated upon a significant strategic reappraisal, of which this VAP mission may play a part. These funders have underwritten specific parts of the AI Nova program for a fixed period of time. AI Nova has also introduced a comprehensive tuition-fee policy for its full-time students and is offering a broad variety of training courses for a mixed professional clientele on a fee-for-service basis. In short, AI Nova's existence, and subsistence, rests entirely on the entrepreneurial spirit of its management and staff and on its ability to generate a steady stream of revenue for the programs that it is running.
32. While these financial provisions imply a maximum degree of freedom and flexibility for AI Nova to design its academic programs according to its own mission and criteria of relevance, they also imply a number of serious limitations with regard to the long-term viability of the institution including the dependence on
- 32.1 market demands in the East/Southeast European education sector (what is the market niche for AI Nova programs?);
  - 32.2 foundation priorities concerning themes, subject areas and objectives they are willing to support (what are the most likely funding opportunities?);
  - 32.3 fixed term revenue sources for recurrent financial needs (rent, infrastructure, part of the staff).



In light of these limiting factors, AI Nova's overall financial circumstances can be described as being highly volatile. Its independence, which allows it to offer an innovative program of postgraduate education relevant to the needs of re-developing countries, at the same time exposes AI Nova to financial uncertainties that puts considerable pressure on the management of the institution.

33. The Visiting Advisors Team was impressed by AI Nova's flexible approach to securing the necessary funds for its operations. The long list of international donors is in itself a proof of the high degree of appreciation and recognition that AI Nova enjoys for its programs. The Team also believes that drawing on highly diversified sources of income is the best strategy for AI Nova to preserve its independence and its innovative capacity with regard to its academic profile. However, there are a number of challenges concerning the financial sustainability of the institution that the Team feels ought to be addressed as a matter of priority, which we now explore.

33.1 AI Nova needs a stable source of income for its core infrastructure and staff expenditures. Thus far, these costs have been covered either by special grants of international donors or by earmarking certain percentages of other revenue sources (project grants, tuition fees, fees for training courses) for a certain purpose. In the long run, this will not be a suitable way for AI Nova to exist and pay its monthly bills. There is a danger that AI Nova will have to accumulate more and more projects exceeding its capacity to execute them carefully, just in order to reap the marginal benefit of overhead costs that can support the institution's infrastructure. Therefore, the Visiting Advisors Team **strongly urges the AI Nova leadership to make a concerted and determined effort of convincing the relevant authorities within the Slovak government that AI Nova deserves public support for its activities.**

33.2 For more than a decade, AI Nova has provided an outstanding service to the Slovak Republic by offering innovative and highly relevant programs of postgraduate education for Slovak as well as for international students, thereby contributing substantially to the ambition of the Slovak Republic to be regarded as an open-minded country with a modern and reform-oriented education system. It is unreasonable to expect that international donors will continue to carry the entire costs of this small but internationally very visible institution that is so clearly serving the best interest of Slovakia.

**In the view of the Visiting Advisors Team, a special case should be made for AI Nova to become eligible for public support from Slovak sources. Those involved in AI Nova as members of the Board of Trustees, the civic association or in any other capacity and who have some influence on (and leverage with) the Slovak government should use any occasion to raise this issue with government representatives.** The country has a comparatively poor record with regard to students from abroad studying at Slovak universities (only slightly more than one per cent of the entire full-time and part-time student population). AI Nova is a bright exception in this respect and should be rewarded for its successful work of placing the Slovak Republic firmly on the map of international higher education various universities could be the focus of such lobbying.

33.3 While over time AI Nova managed to diversify its sources of income, the main "product" that it is offering has remained remarkably unchanged: a one-year postgraduate education in a subject area that is not (yet) well represented in traditional universities of the region (the program in Applied Economics used

to be a two-year course). During the past few years, AI Nova added a larger number of short-term training courses for various professional groups to its program, effectively expanding its profile to include important aspects of continuing education and lifelong learning.

**The Visiting Advisors Team recommends that AI Nova should continue to explore additional possibilities to broaden and diversify its programs in terms of course content (new study subjects) as well as formats and modes of delivery (e.g., modular block courses for adult learners).** In the United States, the so-called “non-traditional students” are the fastest growing segment of the student population, and AI Nova is well positioned to respond to this trend, which is likely affect European higher education as well. Given the constant need of AI Nova to earn its own financial survival, it cannot afford to limit itself to mainly one educational product but must permanently review and renew its programs.

34. At times when prospects for increasing or even stable subsidies are dim, every higher education institution must seek for efficiency gains by scrutinizing the expenditure side of the budget. AI Nova is no exception to this rule and must take a hard look into its budget to identify costs that could be reduced. Given the small number of AI Nova full-time students, the costs per student are invariably rather high compared to other, larger higher education institutions in the region. Decreasing the per-unit costs by expanding the total number of students must therefore remain a priority for AI Nova. Particular issues for scrutiny include
  - 34.1 the salaries and number of administrative staff both require close attention and readjustment since they represent the bulk of expenditures.
  - 34.2 it may be worthwhile for AI Nova to explore the possibilities of part-time student employment in certain areas like library, student services, secretarial work etc since this could save costs for salaries and at the same time it provides opportunities for students to earn part of their living expenses (not to mention the positive effects it could have on strengthening the “corporate identity”).
  - 34.3 scope for rationalization and elimination of duplication of course offerings across the programs.
  - 34.4 no item in the budget should be too small to escape the inspection of the AI Nova management in its efforts to attenuate expenditures. In this respect, the Visiting Advisors Team welcomes the introduction of a new computer-based financial management system at AI Nova, which provides an integrated tool for accountancy with all the relevant data being constantly updated and transparent to all users.
  - 34.5 enhanced marketing efforts for more students to decrease unit costs and increase class sizes.
  - 34.6 investigation of the curriculum load per course, and the proportion of self managed learning which could be introduced to reduce staff time.
35. The overall budget of AI Nova is devised in a “bottom-up,” decentralized manner by summing up the budgets of the individual departments that administer their funds more or less on their own. To the VAP Team, this seems like a cumbersome method, which also raises questions in terms of the absence of a strategic overview,

consistency of spending criteria, and equity of resource allocation. The new financial management system provides the opportunity to improve the existing mode of budgeting and to replace it by an inclusive approach that uses financial data for institutional development and strategic planning purposes (like the creation of a development fund or the cross-financing of programs that are of benefit to the institution as a whole) and for financial monitoring purposes.

36. In financial matters, AI Nova currently behaves not so much like a single, integrated institution but like a loosely connected conglomerate of semi-independent units which have to pay their percentage-based dues in support of the “Central Administration” (including infrastructure costs like rent for the premises). This is obviously a false perception that should be corrected: there is only one institution, AI Nova, which earns and allocates the financial resources, and the departments are the constituent parts of this institution. It is perhaps even more important to emphasize this in times of financial hardships when there is a tendency for self-interest to prevail. An integrated budget is a powerful tool to counteract centrifugal forces and to make strategic decisions in the interest of AI Nova as a whole, based on hard financial data.
37. The VAP Team thus strongly recommends the purpose evolution of this new budgeting approach, which should, *inter alia*, involve
  - 37.1 an AI Nova-wide financial strategy,
  - 37.2 explicit targets for income as well as expenditure per department,
  - 37.3 a transparent and equitable method of calculating and distributing the “top-slice,”
  - 37.4 a clear link between academic and strategic planning,
  - 37.5 comparative cost-ratios of efficiency,
  - 37.6 comparable salary scales and ranges across the institution.
38. The same principle should also apply in the event of the establishment of the proposed Post Graduate Institute, which, as indicated previously, should be agreeable in principle, as an integral part of AI Nova, through a visible identity for external purposes. We appreciate that discussions are at a very early stage of detail, but consideration should be given to the planning document’s financial projections. We noted such problems as the
  - 38.1 unclear financial assumptions and calculations on the assistant professor line (€720,000 not €360,000?);
  - 38.2 vague on the income sources and levels to underpin the project;
  - 38.3 unclear on the contributions to running AI Nova, use of library, etc.

Clearly more work needs to be done on the calculations, and in further discussions about this worthwhile proposal, the senior management of AI Nova should be included because they would eventually have to take responsibility for the appropriateness of the financial projections.

## **Staffing**

39. AI Nova is, of course, a very unusual and distinctive institution of higher education, which, in terms of personnel, embraces the following characteristics:
- 39.1 A small core group of primarily management and administrative staff, centered on the program managers, who are all the academic leaders;
  - 39.2 A decentralized human resource management system, where decisions on recruitment, selection, induction, deployment remuneration, and control and development are taken at the program management level, which has not worked out too badly to date;
  - 39.3 A ratio of full-time to part-time staff of about 1:46, which, on the one hand, would seem to potentially signify a certain vulnerability; fragmented delivery; over-reliance on older (maybe retired) Western professors and younger Slovaks; and lack of a permanent academic community, particularly in relation to joint research and scholarship (see also paragraph 26–30 on research). However, there are demonstrably advantages in this pattern:
    - students willingly testify to the diversity in perspectives and approach contributed by the variety of part-time staff,
    - such diversity is vastly greater than with equivalent numbers of full-timers,
    - more flexibility in terms of resource management and transfer is possible, especially in terms of financial scarcity.

On balance, therefore, we believe this to be a relatively successful policy, (subject to comments below) and is consistent with an innovative philosophy of teaching and learning at AI Nova, though the balance does need to be addressed, certainly to satisfy external accreditors.

40. **Such diversity does require, however, particular attention in other areas to ensure that the expectations of the staff and those of the institution are in concert. In this regard, we believe a central point of responsibility for matters of human resources is essential. A central locus of responsibility, in addition to providing the oversight and information necessary to ensure best outcomes, will be more efficient, eliminating the duplication of effort now occurring as each program area engages in recruiting, hiring, and assessing current and subsequent employment.**

**In the Spring 2002 Self Assessment Study, a Human Resources Committee was mentioned. This is fine, but some central executive responsibility is also needed.**

**Having human resources experience in the central administration should ensure defined mechanisms for effective contact, communications, and evaluation between employer and staff, lowering institutional liabilities and increasing the more effective and coherent delivery of instruction to students. Such mechanisms should also ensure that staff act responsibly and ethically, observe the conditions of their employment contracts and function in a manner consistent with the mission and purposes of AI Nova.**

41. We would draw attention specifically to:
- 41.1 **The need for a systematic staff development policy and program for part-time lecturers containing, *inter alia*:**
- **expectations of them by AI Nova;**
  - **style of expected behavior, including ethical considerations;**
  - **quality assurance policy and mechanisms;**
  - **staff appraisal;**
  - **AI Nova's responsibility for further staff development (within limits);**
  - **any research and publications desiderata, especially of a cooperative and inter-disciplinary nature;**
  - **any expectations regarding part-timers' efforts in public relations and student recruitment for AI Nova.**
- 41.2 The need for a formal staff development program for the program director, especially in relation to their academic upgrading.
- 41.3 Reconsidering the unusual balance of full-time to part-time staff, especially with regard to possible future external accreditations; long-term stability; and the possible addition of a Postgraduate Institute. As indicated separately, we would argue for a coherent integration of the proposed Institute with the rest of the AI Nova. The proposals for the new Institute do include two heads of department, six assistant professors, two administrative coordinators and two administrative assistants. Leaving aside the question of financing for the moment, this general direction of reinforcing the full-time core is one we applaud in principle.
42. During the discussions, the metaphor of a family was used with regard to AI Nova. To sustain the metaphor: in a family, roles and responsibilities may change and shift over time, but the integrity, health, and coherence of the family unit depends on the individual health, stability, and appropriate discharge of responsibilities of each of its members. Ensuring such credibility and stability for the staff would be the appropriate responsibility of a central office for human resources.

### **Internal Organization**

43. The internal organization of AI Nova is a reflection of its history and of the special nature of this institution, which owes its existence to a genuine civil society initiative. It is also a small HEI, which does not justify a complex organizational structure. These factors have to be taken into account when analyzing the features that characterize the way in which AI Nova is structured internally.
44. The present organizational chart shows a straightforward formal vertical model with the Executive Director at the top with the academic programs (lately renamed into "departments") and the central administration (including library and technical services) divided into two columns. On the other hand, we understand from our discussions during the visit that the decision-making processes at AI Nova are rather

“flat” and horizontal with a preference to an inclusive and participatory style of leadership. This might occasionally instigate a more time-consuming *modus operandi* and perhaps even a lack of executive “vigor;” but it underlines the civil society origins of AI Nova and thus the value base of the institution. The Visiting Advisors Team trusts that in the course of its more than ten years of existence with many ups and downs, AI Nova has gained enough experience to manage matters of internal organization in a way that is most suitable to the specific needs and purposes of the institution. However, we want to encourage AI Nova’s leadership to be flexible and to constantly rethink and adjust the organization according to changing circumstances. To this end, we offer the following observations and suggestions concerning three important segments of the institution:

45. Program Academic Boards (PAB)

These fulfill two main functions:

- 45.1 They are the main custodians of the academic integrity of the institution, which is important since AI Nova, for reasons mentioned above, is not eligible for formal accreditation of its postgraduate programs by the relevant Slovak authorities. This is different for programs in the area of life-long learning like the one in Public Policy which is accredited.
  - 45.2 In the absence of an institution-wide quality assurance mechanism, the PAB function as an institutionalized self-evaluation body. Both functions are crucial to ensure the academic creditability of AI Nova.
46. The operation of the PAB is at the informal end of the spectrum. They generally meet twice annually to consider recruitment and links of program development for the year and a summary of program evaluations. They operate largely separately, but the managing directors meet informally for the sharing of perspectives.
47. The Visiting Advisors Team would like to encourage AI Nova to strengthen the role of the PAB by developing a more consistent and systematic approach towards assessment and advancement of quality standards within the individual academic programs. In particular, it should reconsider the current practice with regard to the:
- 47.1 **Composition of the PAB by the inclusion of more external members who have no current involvement in AI Nova’s programs as visiting lecturers and/or represent a broader spectrum of stakeholders instead of only academics.**
  - 47.2 **Expectations being more specific in defining the mandate and the responsibilities of the PAB by drafting a set of guidelines indicating what is expected of them.**
  - 47.3 **Reporting by introducing an annual self-evaluation report prepared by the program management and following a common model throughout all AI Nova programs. This might include**
    - **an annual SWOT analysis;**
    - **a thorough review of these reports and a written statement of action arising, by the PAB.**

**47.4 Transparency: (publicizing the self-evaluation reports and the statements of the PAB within the AI Nova community and through availability on the Web.**

48. As part of the progressive systematization of the work of AI Nova, the VAP Team is concerned that there does not seem to be an explicit collegial body to supervise all academic matters. These matters would include general academic policy; course development; quality assurance; development of common core subjects and course rationalization; policy regarding credit transfer and accumulation, especially in the context of Bologna; research and pedagogy. The point is that there is no obvious internal forum for energizing the overall concept of AI Nova. We note that the proposal for a Postgraduate Institute at AI Nova indicates there should be an Academic (or Scientific) Board for the new Master's programs. In our view,

**48.1 there should be an Academic Board anyway – external accreditors would expect one;**

**48.2 if the Postgraduate Institute proposal is consummated, any new Academic Board should cover the academic work of the expanded AI Nova.**

49. Board of Trustees (BoT)

As the supreme statutory body within the AI Nova structure, the BoT combines a supervisory function including the approval of the annual budget, and an advisory function, mainly to support the Executive Director in terms of institutional strategy and planning. As a silent expectation, the BoT also has a role in trying to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of AI Nova. This is ostensibly the main external interface body of the institution, in which the VAP Team observes:

49.1 The relationship between the General Assembly and Board of Trustees is ill defined, with apparently overlapping jurisdiction on budget and policy matters. The fact that the Assembly seldom meets is therefore advantageous, but we wonder whether it is really necessary.

49.2 BoT members are extremely busy and AI Nova has a relatively low place on personal agendas. It is therefore imperative to use BoT to the best possible advantage.

50. **In light of the above, the VAP Team therefore recommends**

**50.1 the abolition of the General Assembly;**

**50.2 improvement of the operations of the BoT by**

- **better preparations: Board meetings must be perfect with the dates fixed and the agenda and materials sent out well in advance (clearly structured, concise and accessible),**
- **improving the balance of the gender mix by considering the appointment of more female Board members,**
- **providing an opportunity to involve the BoT more closely and directly into the life of AI Nova, e.g. by organizing informal gatherings with students and/or faculty, attendance in the**

classroom or a special “Board Seminar” open to the entire AI Nova community where BoT members are asked to give a presentation or participate in a panel discussion,

- establishing continuous contact with the individual Board members asking for their opinions and advice on matters in which they might have special expertise (for example, budgeting, contacts to government, international agencies or funders, new curricula, etc). The key word for working with the BoT is *involvement*. Ideally this should be a reciprocal process but it is for AI Nova to identify different ways and levels of involvement for each BoT member.

#### 51. Managing Directors

Due to the small number of permanently employed academic staff, all five Managing Directors have a very broad portfolio that encompasses the entire provision of the program, including student recruitment and selection, identifying and inviting suitable visiting lecturers to managing financial matters, fundraising and preparing meetings of the PAB. The members of the Team were impressed by the palpable dedication to their work and the high degree of professionalism of this group of young and strongly motivated AI Nova staff. Despite (or because of?) their youth, they are eager to assume responsibility and to overcome obstacles by working hard and by investing an additional measure of commitment. It bodes well for the future of AI Nova that a next generation of institutional leaders is already in the offing.

To strengthen the effectiveness of Managing Directors, the Team recommends the following:

- 51.1 **Communication:** there seems to be room for more deliberate communication and exchange among Managing Directors who meet each other daily in formal and informal settings but who are not involved in a regular and continuous process of joint program planning. It may appear superfluous in a comparatively small organization like AI Nova to call in periodical staff gatherings, but this perception can be deceptive. The strenuous daily routine often prevents valuable experience from being exchanged and new ideas from flowing from one department to another. Cross-fertilization of ideas usually does not happen naturally but as a result of opportune circumstances that can be arranged. The Visiting Advisors Team recommends that AI Nova consider holding weekly or bi-weekly meetings (possibly with a different Managing Director setting up the agenda for each meeting).
- 51.2 **Professional development:** it has been mentioned elsewhere in this report with regard to the large number of part-time lecturers teaching at AI Nova that staff development should be seen as a high priority (see paragraph 41.2). The same is true for the group of Managing Directors: While many of the qualifications needed for their positions may be subject to “learning by doing”, AI Nova needs a cadre of well trained professionals with intimate knowledge about higher education trends and developments in Europe and beyond and with a broad international network of professional contacts. It should therefore be possible for AI Nova Managing Directors to attend seminars, meetings, conferences that are relevant to their program area and can help develop their professional skills, on a planned systematic basis.



52. **In the view of the Visiting Advisors Team, it might be worthwhile for AI Nova to consider the creation of the position of *Head of Programs and Development* with the goal**
- 52.1 **to pool and coordinate the existing experience and knowledge generated in the individual programs,**
  - 52.2 **to facilitate synergies and enhance AI Nova's planning capacity,**
  - 52.3 **to act as a regular interface between the Executive Director and the programs,**
  - 52.4 **to maximize the effective use of resources in the delivery of courses, and avoid duplication.**
53. In earlier paragraphs, we have discussed the possibilities of a Postgraduate Institute at AI Nova, which we concluded would be a very welcome development. There are organizational implications if this initiative is to proceed. A number of broad options exist in terms of how the Institute might fit into AI Nova. These might usefully be considered using the framework of a matrix with levels of integration and domains of activity as the axes.
54. Assuming the Post Graduate Institute proposal were approved, and AI Nova becomes its location, there arises the question of the organizational ramifications, of which a number of broad options exist within a matrix of levels of integration and domains of activity.

Domain	Level of Integration		
	Complete Integration (A)	Selective Integration (B)	Little Integration (C)
Academic			
Financial			
Governance			
Administrative			
Staffing			

Obviously, the precise positioning is a matter of serious future debate. Our reading of the Institute proposal would indicate a strong disposition toward Column C (Little Integration), where AI Nova is little more than a home for an otherwise largely self-contained operation. It would be equally possible to have substantial common governance and management, but a self-contained academic program (the two Master's and any subsequent doctorate programs). It would also be possible to have a more or less complete integration but retain a completely identifiable set of Masters programs. On the whole, the VAP Team favors a combination of A and B, but certainly with a common Board of Trustees, Academic Council, common administration and coherent program linkages. **We recommend a full discussion of these possibilities.**

## **Conclusions**

55. Al Nova has reached a very interesting point in its development and stands today at a genuine crossroads. What it has achieved so far is very laudable given its size and the volatile environment in which it operates. It is clearly well-regarded by its students, by the considerable number of professors and lecturers who enjoy its stimulating atmosphere, and it has created a very supportive culture and caring atmosphere, which is enhanced by its size and intimacy. All this we commend.
56. However, times are changing: competition heats up; training and educational needs move on as the environment throws up fresh challenges; stakeholders and sponsors expect to see dynamic involvement with societal needs, and the ability to create exciting new programs to meet these needs. Thus, the overarching priorities that inform virtually all of our many recommendations would seem to be thus:
  - 56.1 The continuing evolution of the Diploma program, and the addition of new specializations pertinent to the age.
  - 56.2 The enrichment of the continuing education provision, broadly defined, with more flexible delivery, and (with 56.1 above) attention to credit accumulation and the Bologna framework.
  - 56.3 The vertical extension of the academic profile into the Master's domain initially, and doctoral domain eventually, which is likely to be made more possible through the Postgraduate Institute proposal, with some of the modifications we suggest. We again re-assert the importance of a thorough preparation period for the Postgraduate Institute, adequately supported by strong academic direction and administrative assistance, as well as necessary finance, for which external exploratory funding should be sought.
  - 56.4 An improved strategic planning/quality assurance cycle, and the early production of a three-year strategic and business plan.
  - 56.5 Some organizational readjustments to deliver desired academic objectives.
57. As we have stated, Al Nova is at a crossroads. The institution has a unique opportunity, by virtue of its intellectual underpinnings, to make a significant difference in the lives of its students and in the quality of life in the region and beyond. The question of whether there is a core to its programs has sometimes arisen. We would argue that its core resides in the fact that its programs are drawn together by the common threads of striving to be reflective of social needs; of striving to be interdisciplinary in approach; of striving to be cooperative by nature; in striving to integrate new ideas; in striving to protect high standards; and in striving to be flexible to change. In this, it is important that Al Nova keep close to its stakeholders, markets and sponsors, thus retaining and enhancing its legitimacy; that it nourishes its essential character; and that it pays especial attention to long-term sustainability.
58. We wish Al Nova well in its endeavors to define and enter the next stage of its development and are confident it can do so with distinction.

### **Visiting Advisors:**

**John DAVIES** is dean of the graduate school and former pro vice chancellor for research, enterprise, and innovation at Anglia Polytechnic University, Chelmsford, United Kingdom, and pro vice chancellor for quality assurance and organization development at La Trobe University, Australia. He is also professor of higher education policy and management at the University of Bath, academic director of the European Rectors Management Program, and has been a consultant in higher education management to the European University Association and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since 1977. The founding dean of the Anglia Business School and chair of its Higher Education Management Program, Professor Davies has undertaken numerous strategic consultancy projects in higher education in several countries and directed research and development projects for OECD, UNESCO, and the European Union. He is a member of the Universities Project Advisory Committee.



**Marcellette WILLIAMS** is past chancellor and senior vice president for international relations (on working leave) and professor of English and comparative literature at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, USA. Prior to serving as chancellor (interim: 2001 to 2002), Dr. Williams served as deputy chancellor for eight years. Before joining the University in January 1994, Dr. Williams served as executive assistant to the president and corporate secretary of the Board of Trustees; as project coordinator for internal institutional advancement in the Office of the Provost; as associate chairperson in the Department of English; as associate director of the English Language Center; and as associate professor of English at Michigan State University (MSU). She consulted for nearly a decade throughout Asia and in Europe through MSU's Graduate Studies in Education Overseas Program. She has held major elected and appointed offices in professional associations at the state and national level. Currently Dr. Williams' research focuses on the language of leadership: its metaphors and other dimensions of rhetoric and its capacity to persuade, motivate, and renew. Dr. Williams holds a Ph.D. in English from Michigan State University.



**Jochen FRIED** is director of the Universities Project of the Salzburg Seminar. Prior to joining the Seminar in 1998, he worked as head of programs at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna, and as senior officer in the secretariat of the German Science Council in Cologne, Germany. After receiving a doctorate in German literature from Düsseldorf University, Germany in 1984, he was lecturer at Cambridge University, United Kingdom and at the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia under the auspices of the German Academic Exchange Service. Dr. Fried's main area of professional interest is higher education and research policy. He serves as an expert for the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, and is a member of the editorial board of the UNESCO-CEPES quarterly review *Higher Education in Europe*.



**Schedule of the Visit:**

Date and time	Topic	Participants	Location
<b>Sunday, May 25<sup>th</sup></b>			
14:30	Meeting at the airport	VAP Team Mr. Varga - taxi	Vienna airport, outside of the arrivals
15:30	Arrival to the Hotel Tatra in Bratislava	VAP Team	Hotel Tatra
19:00	Welcome Dinner	VAP Team Prof. Pišút (BoT) L. Mullender (BoT) J. Kilián Z. Štefániková	Restaurant Harmónia
<b>Monday, May 26<sup>th</sup></b>			
8:30	Departure from the Hotel Tatra	VAP Team M. Kadriaková	
9:00 – 10:00	Meeting with the Executive Director, presentation of the programme	VAP Team Z. Štefániková	Braun room
10:00 – 11:00	Tour through the institution, AINova Library presentation	VAP Team Z. Štefániková M. Žitnanská	AINova, Svätý Jur
11:00 – 11:30	Coffee break		
11:30 – 13:00	Meeting with managing directors of the AINova departments. Presentation of running activities	VAP Team L. Gembešová J. Plevová M. Darulová R. Vician E. Šýkorová Z. Štefániková	Braun room
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch		Hotel Maxim
14:30 – 16:00	Meeting with members of the Programme Advisory Boards	VAP Team G. Kiliánová Ch. Klisz J. Kilián D. Borutová V. Íra A. Findor, n.n.	Braun room
16:00 – 16:30	Coffee break		
16:30 – 17:30	Meeting with AINova students	Programmes: PAEF, EP, ACS, ES	Braun room
18:00 – 19:00	Meeting with Prof. Ladislav Kabat, Dean of the Faculty of Economic and Social Sciences, Comenius University	VAP Team Z. Štefániková	Hotel Tatra
19:00	Dinner Team Debriefing meeting		Hotel Tatra
<b>Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup></b>			
8:30	Departure from the Hotel Tatra	VAP Team M. Kadriaková	
9:00 – 10:30	Meeting with administrative staff of	VAP Team	Braun room

	AINova - Executive Director, Director for Administration, Administrative structure of the Postgraduate Institute (PI)	Z. Štefániková D. Muller	
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break		
11:00 – 13:00	Meeting with members of the preparation team for the Postgraduate Institute. Academic profile of the PI	VAP Team L. Bruszt J. Horváth D. Malová J. Pišút Z. Štefániková	Braun room
13:00 – 14:30	Lunch		
14:30 – 16:30	Meeting with members of the preparation team for the Postgraduate Institute Financial requirements of the PI	VAP Team L. Bruszt J. Horváth Z. Štefániková	Braun room
16:30	Departure to the Hotel Tatra	VAP Team	Hotel Tatra
17:00 – 18:00	Dinner	VAP Team	Hotel Tatra
19:00	Opera Nabucco	VAP Team M. Kadriaková	Slovak National Theater
Wednesday, May 28 <sup>th</sup>			
8:30	Departure from the Hotel Tatra	VAP Team M. Kadriaková	
9:00 – 11:00	Preparation of the Report	VAP Team	Braun room
11:30 – 12:30	Presentation of the Report to the Executive Director		Braun room
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch		Hotel Maxim
13:30	Departure from Svätý Jur to the Hotel Tatra	VAP Team	
14:30	Departure from the Hotel Tatra to the Vienna airport	VAP team	Hotel Tatra



## **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**

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.

### **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 2003, more than sixty VAP visits will have taken place to universities in East and Central Europe and Russia. A full schedule of visits is planned for 2004. The addition of the Visiting Advisors Program brings to the Universities Project an applied aspect and serves to enhance institutional and personal relationships begun in Salzburg.

The Salzburg Seminar acknowledges with gratitude the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which are funding the Universities Project and the Visiting Advisors Program respectively.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information regarding the Salzburg Seminar's Visiting Advisors Program, the Universities Project, and Salzburg Seminar programs, please contact one of the Seminar's offices below.

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