

Recommendations of the SibFU International Advisory Council (IAC) subsequent to the teleconference of June 14/15 2017.

Members of the Council present on the teleconference:

Hans Ågren (Sweden), Malcolm K Hughes (USA)¹, José M López-Cepero (Spain), Jacek Oleksyn (Poland), Christiane Schmullius (Germany).

During the course of our discussions three areas were mentioned as being of particular relevance to the participation of the Siberian Federal University (SibFU) in the “5 – 100” project. These were:

- 1) reform of the university governance system;
- 2) reform of the management of human resources, and
- 3) increasing the share of Masters and Ph.D. students from other universities, Russian and international.

We will comment briefly on each of these and then follow with some other topics.

We did not discuss items 1) and 2) extensively during the teleconference, but two general concerns arose in our subsequent discussions.

First, the further professionalization of the management and support systems of the university is to be welcomed. Significant steps are being taken to this end. Experience in large, multi-purpose universities analogous to SibFU suggests that transparency of governance and active involvement of academic staff at all levels is essential in determining strategic directions and general principles for the university. It would be helpful for the IAC to know how this works at present at SibFU and what actions are planned to sustain and improve transparency and academic staff engagement.

Second, you are obviously aware of the tension between effective management of human resources and providing attractive conditions of work and career development. There is clearly a need to maintain a healthy age structure and to discourage complacency. On the other hand, in order to have a chance to attract the brightest and best academic staff, SibFU must be able to offer the support and career security they can find elsewhere, globally.

Several suggestions were made and questions raised concerning increasing the share of Masters and Ph.D. students from elsewhere (the third topic mentioned at the beginning of this document):

- To attract Ph.D. students, the title of the degree and its requirements need to fit international expectations. ‘Kandidat Nauk’ is perhaps not broadly attractive.
- ERASMUS exchanges should be encouraged with mutual accreditation of courses.
- It is essential to lower the barriers to admission of students whose qualifications are from other universities.

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- Masters programs aimed at SibFU's international student targets should, in general, use English as the language of teaching and learning.
- There are, however, potentially very valuable opportunities for combining the teaching of Russian as a second language (RSL) with Masters and other programs, for example for students from Poland.
- As already demonstrated with KTH, Sweden, double degree programs for Ph.D. or Dr. Phil. with foreign universities can provide a doubly enriched education experience and career network for students, among other important advantages.
- There was enthusiastic discussion of distance learning approaches, including but not limited to MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).
- The lower entry cost for more modest distance learning courses may suggest this as a way to demonstrate the diverse strengths of SibFU. One specific possibility that was discussed related to course materials on Radar Remote Sensing already developed by colleagues in Jena. The scope of such courses could be enhanced by coupling them with in-person short laboratory, field or practice courses, including but not limited to summer schools.
- There was discussion of a 'branded' series of summer schools strongly identified with SibFU and its strengths, aimed at graduate students and early career scientists. This could form an attractive 'taster' experience of SibFU for students and potential academic staff from other universities.
- Special measures should be taken to attract cadres of excellent postdoctoral fellows from around the World to the most active and promising research groups at SibFU. This should be a high priority use of resources. It is likely to be very effective in raising the quantifiable international standing of SibFU (e.g. high profile scientific publications) and spreading the word of its strengths among the most active and mobile researchers. This should be seen as one part of an ongoing strategy to recruit, integrate and retain a new cohort of young people.
- There is a need for accessible and professional advice in the preparations of proposals to Russian and international sources of research funding.

Finally, we encourage our colleagues at SibFU to maintain a strong emphasis in their presentations on the fields where they have already achieved internationally recognized excellence. We also suggest that attention be given to the different expectations in technological and professional areas as compared with other fields of education and research (so-called 'basic science' and humanities, for example), both in the internal planning and evaluation of the university and in its presentation at the national level.

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