

The Making of World Class Research Universities
in an Age of Globalization
- Components & Challenges

November 6, 2003
Panel Discussion

Panel Discussion

Good morning.

It is a pleasure to be here this morning with our other panelists in order to discuss research universities. As you are aware, “leadership” is now synonymous with “challenge”, especially when it is viewed in the context of higher education and research universities. They also mean that we are being called upon to respond and be accountable to those who look to us for leadership. In order to be successful, we must encourage our institutions of higher education to continue to progress and make changes based on innovation, effective adjustments, planning and a willingness to become involved with meaningful visions for their futures.

Taiwan’s ten years of Educational Reform movement has resulted in the prolific creation and development of higher education institutions, allowing universities and colleges to assume more autonomy by relaxing higher education legal restrictions, promoting a diversified system for admission into

universities and supporting universities to utilize their resources, so as to establish learning environments for internationalization.

In spite of these achievements, there remains an imbalance. This imbalance has to do with an increase in quantity over a decrease in quality. Currently, in Taiwan there are 1,240,292 students enrolled in some form of higher education programs. Additionally, there are 168 institutions of higher learning, which includes universities, colleges and junior colleges. This rapid development of higher educational institutions and the availability of education for all segments of the population, not just the elite, have affected the quality of higher education.

Other challenges facing our universities include a lack of diversification or development of specialty areas within their university environment, declining student enrollment due to the society's shrinking birthrate, overseas competition, especially from Mainland China, with attractive study packages, as a result of WTO and globalization.

On a global scale, we face challenges with our internationalization process for higher education. Given the fact that we have made progress with regard to educational and

cultural exchanges between our universities and universities abroad, we still need to work at upgrading our universities so that they meet international standards.

Since our entry into WTO, we have been given a way to maximize our market opportunities and to change our current crisis into one of opportunity. We have been given a chance to have our universities develop their own specialty areas, so that they can distinguish themselves internationally, especially in the areas of research, training and development.

However, other countries realize this, too. As they grapple with their own challenges with internationalization, they are also aware of the tremendous opportunities that await them. Therefore, it is crucial that our universities realize the significance of our immediate situation. If they do not begin to upgrade their university systems and infrastructures, they will lose out on a unique international economic opportunity and they will not be able to sustain themselves, on a domestic level, because other international universities will attract their students from them.

Currently, in the U.S., Hong Kong, Australia and Mainland China, these countries have intensified their recruitment activities of overseas students. In Europe, the European Commission has created a new program entitled “Erasmus World”, which has been designed to enhance and strengthen international links in higher education by enabling students and visiting scholars from around the world to engage in postgraduate study at European universities, as well as by encouraging the international mobility of European students and scholars.

Developing and Promoting Higher University Education

The Ministry of Education has two goals. The Ministry would like at least one of its universities to be ranked among the top 100 leading international institutions of higher education, within the next ten years and to have at least one university ranked as number one, within Asia by the next five years. In order to encourage and motivate the universities, a Taiwan scholarship will be established.

Four areas of classification have been established for our universities to choose from. These classification areas are research, teaching, profession and community and new development.

Universities will also be required to establish a system of evaluation utilizing such methods as the SCI, SSCI and the EI, or be in accordance with standards that meet international recognition for awards, achievements and contributions within their fields of expertise. Although to the criteria above, the Ministry selected 7 universities to be part of a three group pilot program. The National Taiwan University has been selected to represent northern Taiwan. It is an example of a comprehensive academic university, which has integrated and organized its departmental academic resources, to fully benefit the university and its administration.

For central Taiwan, Tsinghua University, Chao-Tung University, Central University and Yang-Ming University have formed an alliance. All four universities are well known for their different specialty areas and their potential for growth and development. They represent what can be accomplished when

they share a vision and willingness to come together for the mutual benefit of their association.

Cheng Kung University and Sun Yat-Sen University are located in southern Taiwan. Their focus, targets of the forming of departmental alliances have the same field of expertise, so that a single research center can be established.

For the past several years, the ministry of Education has provided extra budget for these seven universities to help our universities to pursue excellence. Furthermore, the ministry has earmarked \$50 billion NT dollars, which is to be distributed over a five-year period.

To receive funding the universities must decide which classification they are going to follow. Monies will be dispersed in stages and according to whether the universities have reached their intended goals. For example, for research universities, they must complete a five-stage process ranging over a period of five years, in order to receive maximum funding. In the 1st year, 3 to 5 universities will be selected to receive funding. Then, in the second year, an evaluation process will take place eliminating two or three universities who do not meet the necessary

standards. In the third year, another evaluation will take place to rank those remaining universities to see if they qualify to be among the top 10 leading Asian institutions, within the five-year qualifying period. Once they have received this preferred international status, they must maintain their ranking for the following two years, in order to receive funding.

A similar proposed monetary plan, with slight variations, has been devised for university department centers that would like to be ranked as number one within Asia by the year of 2008. For the first stage, there will be five to ten university departments selected to receive funding. These departments will be evaluated at the end of the first year and only 3 to 5 departments will be selected for the second year phase. The third year will produce the top ranking university department for Asia. This department must maintain its rank for the next two years, in order to continue to receive funding from the Ministry of Education.

Supporting and Encouraging Cooperation for a More Inclusive Internationalized Environment

Our universities are being encouraged to establish substantive academic exchanges with overseas universities, R&D institutions, and scholars renowned for academic excellence. They are also being asked to explore options for establishing international networks, which would support our exposure and connections within the global community.

The Ministry of Education would like to recognize the importance of its own renowned professors, in Taiwan. It realizes that in order to do this, it must make adjustments to the existing salary system, in order to make it more flexible.

Foreign students are also our high priority. Beginning next year, a special Taiwan scholarship fund will be established for \$219,670,000NT dollars. A total of 797 students will be able to pursue their studies, as a result of this scholarship fund.

The strength of first-class universities in Taiwan depends on the strength of their relationships with leading research organizations and centers. Establishing high-caliber research centers will support Taiwan's universities in their quest to successfully compete with other international universities and not be left behind.

With challenge comes opportunity and with opportunity comes success. Our success depends upon the strategies that we create and how these strategies are implemented. If we are to fully realize our opportunities we must join together in the true spirit of these modern times.

Thank you.