



**IEMU**

Internationalizare Echitate  
Management Universitar

# Strategic Planning Meeting Report

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University Name

Romanian-American University

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Quertenmont**

**22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2015**



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“Internationalisation, equity and institutional management for a quality higher education (IEMU)”

## Strategic Planning Meeting Report

Romanian-American University 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2015

### Introduction

#### Overall purpose of the project

Internationalisation is an essential vector for enhancing the quality of the Romanian higher education system and for Romanian universities to fulfill their comprehensive mission. Having as a starting point the recommendations of a previous joint initiative in this field, UEFISCDI and IAU have embarked in April 2014 on a new project - *Internationalization, equity and academic management for higher education quality (IEMU)* - which aims, inter alia, to develop a proposal for a national strategy for internationalization of education, based on a bottom-up vision building process involving all relevant stakeholders. The initiative also aims to develop a sustainable internationalization culture in the Romanian context and thus has as other key objectives to assist twenty universities in their strategic endeavours in this field, to develop a model for a structure for promoting Romanian higher education abroad and a ‘Study in Romania’ type of web portal, as well as a series of indicators for measuring internationalization performance.

### Methodology

#### Approach

Alongside the collection of data and information on the policies and measures in place at the national level to promote internationalization, the approach taken for the case studies involved the preparation of institutional reports by each university. In September 2014, a self-assessment guide was provided for this purpose to all institutions taking part in the study. This guide was based on an instrument developed by the IAU for the *Internationalization Strategies Advisory Service (ISAS)*. The instrument was adjusted following additional feedback from the members of the IAU Expert Panel and UEFISCDI.

The guide was meant to act as a prompt for the institutions as they gathered information and analyzed the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in their internationalization policies, programs and activities. It was suggested in advance that this self-assessment exercise be undertaken by an institution-wide committee, and have the ownership of the entire academic community (i.e. students, teaching and research staff, administrative staff should be part of the self-assessment efforts) within the university.



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This report builds in part on the findings of the *Self-Assessment Report* that was produced by **Romanian-American University** (see **Appendix 1**), and provided to Expert Panel members in advance of their Strategic Planning Meetings. It is also based on the findings of a SPM to **Romanian-American University on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2015** by the Expert Panel members (see below).

### Expert Panel members

The Expert Panel represents a broad range of regional expertise, experience, and cultural backgrounds, and includes a number of international experts, as well as experts from Romania. Though not all panel members can take part in all site visits, all are involved in the policy discussions and the preparation of recommendations.

The panel members who took part in the SPM to **Romanian-American University**

- **Adrian Georgescu** (Chair) Deputy Director, Agenția Națională pentru Programe Comunitare în Domeniul Educației și Formării Profesionale [adrian.georgescu@anpcdefp.ro](mailto:adrian.georgescu@anpcdefp.ro)
- **Professor Elspeth Jones** (Rapporteur) Emerita Professor of the Internationalisation of Higher Education, Leeds Beckett University, UK [ej@elspethjones.com](mailto:ej@elspethjones.com)
- **Dr Pierre Quertenmont** Head, International Office, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium [pierre.quertenmont@ulb.ac.be](mailto:pierre.quertenmont@ulb.ac.be)
- **Professor Mihai Korka** Emeritus Professor of Applied Statistics, Academia de Studii Economice din București [mihaiorka@gmail.com](mailto:mihaiorka@gmail.com)

**Adelina Popa from the UEFISCDI staff also participated during the whole visit.**

IAU staff member coordinating the project activity:

- **Robin Middlehurst** Professor of Higher Education at Kingston University, Program Officer ([r.middlehurst@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:r.middlehurst@kingston.ac.uk))

UEFISCDI staff members coordinating the project activity:

- **Cezar Mihai Hâj**, Project Manager ([cezar.haj@uefiscdi.ro](mailto:cezar.haj@uefiscdi.ro))
- **Ligia Deca**, Internationalisation activity coordinator ([ligia.deca@uefiscdi.ro](mailto:ligia.deca@uefiscdi.ro))
- **Cristina Fiț**, Internationalisation activity policy officer ([cristina.fit@uefiscdi.ro](mailto:cristina.fit@uefiscdi.ro))
- **Alin Filimon**, Assistant manager ([alin.filimon@uefiscdi.ro](mailto:alin.filimon@uefiscdi.ro))

### Expert Panel SPM

The team had meetings with various representatives at university and faculty level. The two-day program for the SPM to **Romanian-American University** consisted of a number of forty-five minutes to one-hour meetings with a broad range of individuals from across **Romanian-American University's** campus community. **Appendix 2** includes the SPM program/agenda, showing the names and job titles of all **Romanian-American University** faculty and staff who met with the panel.



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## Observations following the visit and recommendations for Romanian-American University

### 1. General observations and comments

The team was impressed by the wide-ranging activity across the Romanian-American University in working towards delivery of your internationalisation strategy. There was a lot of good practice in evidence and a very open international (especially European) outlook of staff and students. It was clear that you see great opportunities as a European university and we would encourage you to extend that ambition to a global reach.

We had an excellent welcome on arrival, including from doormen, cleaners etc who seemed to be aware of our visit. There was a very good agenda and everyone seemed well prepared for the kind of questions we might ask. An impressive range of staff from across the institution, both academic and administrative, attended the training session on the morning of the second day and it was especially notable that the Rector stayed for the whole session, indicating a distinctive commitment from senior leadership to the ideals set out in your strategy.

### 2. Rationales and motivations for internationalisation

#### 2.1. Observations

The university's rationales and motivations for internationalisation are comprehensive and clearly set out in your internationalisation strategy. It was evident that those we met share these motivations but of course we cannot be sure that this is true of all members of staff.

#### 2.2. Recommendations

- Ensure that all the faculties share the same rationales and motivations, aligning behind the university's internationalisation strategy and its goals. In particular we noted that the Law faculty may need additional encouragement and support to engage with, for example, student and staff mobility.

### 3. University goals for internationalization

#### 3.1. Observations

We understand that the strategic goals were developed for the 'new' management period from 2012-2016 and that, after one year RAU reviewed and enhanced the strategy, including through discussion with students through School Councils. We



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spent a long time during the training session focusing on the appropriate wording for goals and objectives to incorporate timescales, milestones and who is responsible for delivery. The expert team is confident that there is now a core group of staff with appropriate understanding and expertise who will be able to re-draft the current strategy for consultation across the university.

### 3.2. Recommendations

- As discussed during the training, the current goal for 2020 seems to be more like a vision statement. We invite RAU to consider whether this should be reframed as the vision statement for internationalisation, with goals leading from it;
- Please continue to revise the existing goals, objectives and activities in the way we discussed during the training session, ensuring that differences between them are understood in order to incorporate these into the strategic plan;
- In finalising the strategy please extend the consultation as widely as possible to ensure 'ownership' of the resulting goals and actions. Wider awareness of strategic goals and the actions affecting different parts of the institution will also help staff to see where they can get involved;
- As part of this wider consultation, please also include students' perspectives. Those we met seemed very interested in the international dimensions of RAU and would make a good contribution.

## 4. Institutional communication and promotion

### 4.1. Observations

As far as we understand, there is only one person (Alexandra Enache) responsible for communications and public relations who reports to the Vice-Rector for Strategic Management, Quality Assurance and Institutional Development. Ms Enache has a wide range of responsibilities including editing the university magazine; running social media (the main Facebook pages and links to others such as the student club, Twitter (in English and Romanian), LinkedIn, and Google plus); liaising across the university on updates to the website; liaising with IT support who upload the data; maintaining links with high school students and online groups through Facebook; publishing the student magazine (edited by one of the students we met, Diane Forrest); writing the university blog.

This is a very wide-ranging set of responsibilities for one person and the role does not seem to be integrated into the internationalisation strategy. It is crucial that marketing and communications are entirely embedded in the internationalisation initiatives, not least in promoting RAU to potential students.



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## 4.2. Recommendations

- That the university urgently reviews the appropriacy of staffing in this area and the reporting lines. Similar roles in other universities would report direct to the Rector;
- That the university develops a marketing and communications strategy to promote its work. This can then be used for promotion to students and partners. There may be in-house competence to support this;
- The university is strongly recommended to seek outside support for such essential work and it may be advisable to outsource the process to a company with specific expertise in corporate image, branding and website design if the in-house expertise is insufficient;
- The website which can be found at [www.ro-am.ro](http://www.ro-am.ro) appears to be better developed than the main website (including the English version) and is more appropriate as a recruitment tool. We recommend that there be a single website, along with a translation of it into English (and possibly some sections in other languages);
- As a minimum, the marketing and communications strategy should include:
  - Design of a corporate image and branding which is common across all university marketing. For example on business cards, posters, website and all marketing materials. In many universities, once developed, use of the brand is strictly controlled by a Director of Marketing;
  - Significant emphasis on online activity and social media for promotional purposes as well as to provide information;
  - A more visually attractive and up to date website – consider good examples from other universities outside Romania;
  - Orientation of the website towards recruiting students rather than simply providing a list of information;
  - More emphasis on all the strengths of the university and its many unique selling points (see below);
  - Testimonials from students should include those from countries other than Romania, especially as they are so positive about their experience;
  - Testimonials or interviews with alumni and corporate partners, as well as with current students;
  - A clear focus on the international aspects of RAU's work.

## 5. Partnerships and cooperation

### 5.1. Observations

The expert team was informed that the International Office keeps track of all partnerships, including research partnerships and that they encourage synergy between research and teaching partnerships. This is a key principle in establishing new partnerships that it can develop into a range of areas. Even those which are established for joint research and funding bids, there is always an eye on potential



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teaching relationships and exchange. Partnerships often begin with informal activities through personal connections of colleagues and formal agreements come later.

There is also periodic review of partnerships for activity and a decision made as to whether or not to keep them. There are 80+ Erasmus partnerships, most based on student exchange, but some develop into research partnerships, staff mobility, research bids etc.

Not all partnerships are with universities and there is good collaboration with businesses and industry. In Computer Science for example, there are 20 partnerships, only 3 of which are with universities – company partnerships are crucial to curriculum and opportunities for students and staff. An example was given of working with the emergency services in relation to car crashes with a €10million project value.

## 5.2. Recommendations

- Develop and establish a database of all university partnerships and non-formalised collaborations in teaching, research, company links, administrative collaborations etc
- Incorporate also a formalised, systematic process of review and record keeping. This would sustain institutional memory, rather than being dependent on one or two people remembering the issues and key elements of each agreement, and support future collaborative activity.
- Continue to focus on strategic, multi-functional partnerships
- Given the university title, it may be appropriate to develop more partnerships in the USA, including company links.
- Alumni may be able to help find and establish partners, particularly for company links, as well as professors of Romanian origin in other countries.

## 6. **Student mobility**

### 6.1. Observations

Good coordination and cooperation across the different responsibility areas in the International Office was evident.

There seem to be many activities organised for all international students whether Erasmus or degree-seeking, such as cultural and tourism events and Romanian cultural classes delivered in English. Romanian students on English programmes are also invited to events along with international students on the same programmes and Erasmus students to try and integrate different student groups. One of RAU's goals is to have more Romanian students on English programmes, so this should further increase integration.



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There are several good models across the university of summer schools which bring together Romanian and foreign students but these are not consolidated into a single programme, either to promote recruitment to full degree programmes or to enhance mobility.

#### 6.1.1. Erasmus and other exchange students

There used to be an imbalance in incoming and outgoing Erasmus students but the number of incoming students is now increasing. This seems to be partly a result of delivering programmes in English.

Staff observed it is more difficult to motivate students from Romanian language programmes to be mobile even though they are interested in attending lectures by professors from other countries, suggesting the problem is not a language issue. It is possibly mainly a financial issue – the students don't see mobility as an investment.

There are some issues, not of recognition but of content in compulsory courses, for example in the Law School. Mobility is also limited for the increasing number of students who have jobs while studying who would lose their jobs if they went abroad.

Some internships and Erasmus placement opportunities have been developed in the UK, Portugal, Greece and Malta. These are usually for three months and can take place during the summer period so students don't have to miss any classes.

The International Office gives presentations and runs international study fairs to promote study abroad. Outgoing students often want to help change what may be negative perceptions of Romania. They get a basic 'ambassador pack' and can receive extra materials, for example if the destination university has an international week or other promotional event. Outgoing staff meet Romanian students when they visit partner universities, but do not seem to be acting systematically in promoting mobility opportunities to RAU.

#### 6.1.2. Degree-seeking students

Students were extremely positive about their experiences both on incoming and outgoing exchanges as well as full-time degree-seeking students. This could be used more effectively in promoting RAU and its varied mobility opportunities. For example we saw good examples of testimonials in the Japanese centre and also in the student magazine. These might be more effective if also visible online.

The team understands that recruitment of degree-seeking students is hampered by a range of national level issues – these are addressed in the final section of this report.



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## 6.2. Recommendations

- Consolidate summer schools to act as a promotional mechanism for incoming Erasmus or full-degree students. Summer school coordination may be difficult because of the timing of academic years and the availability of professors. Nevertheless it may be advisable for the programmes to be better coordinated;
- Use an effective marketing and recruitment strategy for the systematic recruitment of full-degree students (see section 4 above);
- Better promote the study opportunities at RAU for international students, whether Erasmus and other exchange students or Degree-seeking students:
  - Articulate the benefits of study abroad in terms of personal transformation eg the development of employability skills, open-mindedness and global outlook, enhanced language skills etc;
  - Put some testimonials online which are already in a book which is available only for consultation in the International Office;
  - As has happened in other universities, develop 'mobility windows' for those programmes which have compulsory content which makes mobility difficult. This takes the form of one semester when no compulsory content is delivered so that students can choose more freely from the programmes on offer at their destination university;
  - Develop the number of agreements with companies to offer more placement/internship opportunities.

## 7. Staff mobility

### 7.1. Observations

Last year there were 55 outgoing mobile staff, the number is increasing and both academic and administrative staff takes part. Returning staff are more engaged in the internationalisation process and bring new perspectives back into the curriculum or into their work with students. They are also more likely to encourage students to take part in mobility opportunities.

We were told that the university tries to encourage staff from partner universities to come and teach, especially those who can offer different perspectives on the curriculum. This also works in the other direction and RAU teaching staff are invited to deliver classes from a Romanian perspective.

Administrative staff is also encouraged to take part in training programmes but it appears they do not visit partner universities for work shadowing or benchmarking of practice.



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## 7.2. Recommendations

- Consider how administrative staff might better benefit from mobility opportunities, not simply for formal training programmes but also, for example, to work shadow a counterpart or learn from alternative administrative systems;
- Seek alternative funding sources for mobility beyond Erasmus and co-financing opportunities. The International Office could play a role in supporting this and identifying possible sources and schemes;
- Mobile staff could be asked to act as recruitment ambassadors when going abroad for training in order to support incoming student mobility;
- Partnership agreements could include co-financing of staff mobility in both directions eg the home university pays for the travel costs and the host university pays for accommodation;
- We suggest that RAU establishes a small, competitive, annual staff travel budget to act as seed (investment) funding for any member of staff to apply for. This might result in joint articles, projects, a joint course, mobility scheme or other activity which adds value to the internationalisation of the institution, not simply the interests of the individual member of staff.

## 8. Internationalisation of the curriculum (and campus life)

### 8.1. Observations

There seem to be many opportunities for Romanian students to have international elements within the extra-curricular experience, such as extra classes taught by non-Romanian staff, summer schools, language learning, however these do not count towards credit.

Students seeking to incorporate credits after study abroad bring back the destination university syllabus which staff can learn from. Innovative elements are brought into the RAU curriculum which helps to refresh and revitalise the curriculum for all. This is a systematic approach in those faculties whose staff we met. The syllabuses come to the Dean who shares new ideas with other members at Faculty quality meetings (each semester). The curriculum cannot be changed within the year for quality assurance reasons, but key elements are introduced for the following year.

After mobility, students are encouraged to discuss their experiences with fellow students, and staff routinely asks about their experiences. We did not hear evidence of systematic incorporation of different global perspectives on the curriculum eg through inviting international students, or those who have taken part in exchange, to share their experiences more formally.



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In order to make mobility as easy as possible, academic staff seeks to align topics with partner institutions when they visit. However, in some disciplines (notably Law) there are still issues of compulsory courses which require students to do catch-up assessments if they have missed these during their study abroad period.

Class scheduling seeks to enable students to be able to attend classes taught by international professors, which offers great advantages for students. Some professors are invited to come to RAU, but requests are also received from professors to be allowed to come eg if they are on sabbatical. Feedback from such course is sought and reviews undertaken.

We observed many aspects of an international campus life, festivals, events, lectures, and flags around the international office. But there is more to do to promote such events etc and make them more visible.

## 8.2. Recommendations

- Ensure that the good practice we observed in curriculum internationalisation extends across all curricula whether delivered in English or Romanian;
- The Faculty of Law may need particular support in this and may benefit from outgoing mobility of staff to observe how mobility is facilitated in other European institutions;
- Continue to develop opportunities to infuse curriculum internationalisation for example by incorporating visiting professors lectures into credits, using international students and returning mobile students' experiences in the classroom etc;
- Consider the subjects in which it may be appropriate to offer more programmes in English at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels to attract international students for degree or credit mobility;
- In reviewing the curriculum ensure that the perspectives of students, companies and employer organisations such as the American Chamber of Commerce are incorporated;
- Through the marketing and communications strategy (see 4) ensure that international dimensions of university life are visible. For example flags and welcomes in different languages could be used in the main entrance hall rather than simply around the International Office.

## 9. **Internationalisation of research**

### 9.1. Observations

Staff in the Research Office seems well aware of the potential interlinking of research and internationalisation. They have good intentions and ideas. There is the limitation currently that PhDs cannot be awarded so a number of funding sources will not be



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available to RAU at present. RAU is very engaged in organising international conferences – this is one way of identifying international research partners.

The main focus currently is on EU Commission funding and training is offered on how to complete funding proposals – last year 17 proposals were prepared and 13 submitted. So far there has been no success although 2 are still pending. RAU acts as coordinator in some bids and in others as partners. RAU is in the process of building a network of partners to support funding applications.

Currently RAU does not offer PhDs but there are many young researchers and they are working towards being in a position to develop a Doctoral school.

The Research centres began with Japan since RAU was looking for something unique. Azerbaijan followed, along with Korean and Chinese which is the most recent centre. Creating the link between cultural components and economic components has been a driver for these developments. Originally it all began as a bottom up proposal to the former Rector.

In developing the centres, RAU is benefiting from young doctoral students and post-docs (who may be studying elsewhere) in establishing relations with potential partners. Also looking to joint programmes with partners – moving from individual to institutional relationships.

All teaching staff is expected to take part in research but it's a bottom-up process and staff is relatively free to select their field of research. They are also expected to publish in internationally-recognised publications and building capacity to become doctoral supervisors – hopefully within 2 years.

## 9.2. Recommendations

- That the Research Office continues in its development plans to coordinate support for competitive funding bids. Plans for the office include identifying opportunities, sending out notifications, matching interests to opportunities, supporting proposals from initiation through to application and delivery. These are all worthy of pursuit and encouraged by the expert team;
- The expert team wondered whether there might be opportunities for internationalisation of research with American universities;
- Consider how internationalisation can support the objective of becoming a PhD awarding institution. Once this is in place, external funding can be used to source international candidates.



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## **10. Internationalisation of staff and staff development**

### **10.1. Observations**

A range of staff and professional development issues and opportunities have already been mentioned in this report. However, the development of staff in regard to the different elements of internationalisation will be crucial in the success of the strategy, so it is worth a separate section to emphasise this.

### **10.2. Recommendations**

- Administrative staff seem to be very interested in international development opportunities – seek out more of these, including opportunities to observe or work shadow practice in partner universities in order to enhance practice;
- Consider increasing the opportunities for administrative as well as academic staff to develop their level of English and/or other languages;
- Consider inviting international experts who can support staff development for internationalisation, especially in relation to administrative or process-related activity;
- View staff development for internationalisation as a crucial element of the human resources strategy and fund it appropriately.

## **11. Administration and management**

### **11.1. Observations**

Non-EU students must have the Ministry of Education acceptance letter but EU students also have to have this. There is a written English exam for admission if the student does not have proof of English level. Apparently, students are not allowed entry from certain countries such as Nigeria, Pakistan, Nepal and Sudan. Students do not get a letter of acceptance because Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Immigration Office won't allow them. But this not a transparent process and has to be learned from experience.

The Chief Secretary is responsible for administering the Diploma Supplement along with the Diploma, which takes a minimum of 3 months after graduation.

Both are issued on formats elaborated by the Ministry of Education so RAU cannot influence content but it may be possible to add extra-curricular classes.

Credit points can only result from courses delivered within the RAU curriculum, although it would be possible for the summer school legally to become part of the credit system.

The university has the intention to appoint international relations coordinators in each faculty, not just Erasmus coordinators. This is to be welcomed.



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International recruitment impacts on finances. The minimum fee is 4 times higher for non-EU students than for Romanian students, currently €2200 for programmes taught in Romanian, €2900 for those taught in English, €3100 for Masters programmes in English and in Romanian €2400.

### 11.2. Recommendations

- That the International Office be strengthened to allow it to perform additional functions for example, the database of partnerships, systematically searching external funding opportunities etc;
- Enhance the administrative functions for internationalisation through staff mobility experiences and/or training in Romania using international experts. This should include all parts of the university. For example, admissions and registrations for students to English programmes seems currently rather complicated and a different route than for those on Romanian-medium programmes;
- Revise information included in Diploma Supplement and complete the relevant quality assurance processes to allow extra-curricular activities to be included;
- Use the additional funding offered by recruiting international students to full-degree programmes in order to feed into further recruitment activity and to support the internationalisation strategy in general.

## 12. **Student Satisfaction and quality enhancement**

Students we met were overwhelmingly positive about their experience both at RAU and during mobility. When asked what they think internationalisation means in one word they replied progress, social skills, success, diversity, cultural exchange, globalisation, professionalism. So it is clear that, for these students at least, internationalisation is seen as a priority. Their experiences abroad were in Lithuania, Finland, UK for internships, US – a work and travel programme, Germany, Cyprus.

### 12.1. Observations from students:

- Employers say they like international experiences but in practice it is not easy to get them to appreciate it;
- They had no problems on return with credit recognition but missing credit from compulsory courses was an issue for some, especially in the Law School. Some had culture shock, including on return;
- Students gave great feedback on the support they received from the International Office both before and during their experience;
- One issue is that the Erasmus contract should be bilingual;
- Using students as ambassadors – one was involved in the Erasmus student fair (in Worms), great info and material was sent from the International Office – unfortunately the fair was only promoted to other Erasmus students;



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- Why do students decide not to take part in mobility from their perspectives? Comfort, they want things to be easy; exams issue and recognition (especially Law); not used to volunteering (internships are unpaid); parents – money and worries about them being far away;
- Some spoke to international students from their chosen destination to get advice, or those who had been there on Erasmus studies;
- Others spoke to no one so had no expectations about the experience in advance;
- Some made friends in the destination country who ended up studying Romanian or coming to visit;
- Students were unanimous in saying how very friendly and helpful the staff are at RAU (both academic and support staff), which made organising the mobility experience very easy;
- They felt that more choice in elective courses would be good, but that courses are pretty international in focus;
- Asked about using their study abroad experience in class or as part of the curriculum when they came back, they said teachers were curious to find out how it was, but this was not really used as part of class to get different perspectives on issues under discussion;
- International students felt the buddy programme was not really successful but they got as much as they needed from it and enjoyed finding things out for themselves – all part of the experience;
- English language classes seem to use language at a lower level than in the content classes. Students felt that differentiated class levels according to need would be more useful;
- There could be more of an international community for example to help international students find jobs;
- There are lots of events but students found it surprising that a lecture by an international professor, which would be delivered in English had all the promotional material and information in Romanian;
- Study abroad promotion is delivered in English – should some of this be in Romanian to attract and support those with less confidence?
- Students were surprised not to find kitchens in the dormitories so that they can cook for themselves.

## 12.2. Recommendations

- Amend the Diploma Supplement to ensure that extra-curricular courses appear;
- Make even more use of students (and staff?) as ambassadors when in other countries, both for RAU and Romania itself;
- The Erasmus contract needs to be bilingual;
- Take note of student comments above and consider changes in practice which can enhance further the student experience.



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## 13. Foreign language learning and promotion

### 13.1. Observations

There seems to be a great interest in foreign language learning across the university and beyond. Currently there are 200 students of Japanese and 80 of Korean. The aim is 50% university students and 50% external. Four centres are under the Department of Asian studies while the Department of Foreign Languages is a separate transversal academic department because it delivers credits.

English is compulsory for 3 years of all Bachelor programmes (including for native speakers of English) but this includes Communication techniques, Business correspondence, Intercultural competence etc so there is something for everyone. A second language is optional from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year but mandatory for the International Business Programme.

Foreign language courses are also offered for staff and there are 37 currently studying (both admin and academic). Skills for staff teaching in English are offered (for 15 -20 people) as a one-week intensive course. This is available for partner universities as well as staff of RAU. Other visiting professors offer English for Academic Purposes courses and Foreign Language Department staff attend for professional development.

In addition to language classes, the Japanese centre offers tea ceremony, Japanese drums, calligraphy, Ikebana, movie history, and the Otaku festival. Japanese pop culture is really popular but so is Korean – now rising quickly. A delegation of staff and students will be visiting Korea and Japan in March.

New partnerships are being explored in Japan, Korea and China. March will see a formal agreement signed with Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto. The Chinese and Azeri centres opened in 2012 but already have a partnership with the Confucius Institute and Open Reach for Korea. These two countries don't have the same pop culture scene and therefore are not as easy to get established.

Staff development courses are undertaken by staff on bridging the gap between cultures. Training in academic writing for staff was delivered by a Hungarian partner.

### 13.2. Recommendations

- Offer English language classes at different levels to address varied levels of competence rather than having mixed ability groups, which are both difficult to teach and frustrating for the students involved;
- More programmes are needed which are delivered in English. Currently there are only two programmes at Bachelor level;
- There may be potential for collaboration with other universities in Bucharest in the delivery of some programmes.



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## 14. Strengths and Unique Selling Points (USPs)

### 14.1. International student observations on Romania's USPs

- Romania is not the country everyone thinks – in fact it is much better. ‘Not as bad as people say’;
- It's very affordable at around €300 a month – probably the only country where you can live within your Erasmus scholarship;
- It's a great country with lots to see;
- (Full programme student) won't graduate with debts;
- Lots of free time because you don't need to have a part-time job;
- Bucharest is very underrated;
- Romania is a good decision if you want to work and have fun as well – especially in Bucharest where there is always something going on;

### 14.2. Returning student observations on Romania's USPs

- Dracula is a key selling point;
- Variety of landscapes - city, sea, mountains. One of the most beautiful countries in Europe but not well promoted as a tourist destination;
- Culture – acts as a gate between east and west;
- Bucharest has brilliant nightlife;
- Very friendly people and very open. Sometimes you don't even need to ask for help, people just come up and help;
- Great internet because it's so recent;
- Most people speak some English, in the cities at least;
- Cheap transport so you can visit lots of places
- Great opportunities for all of this to be promoted both at national level by Romania and also by the Romanian American University.

### 14.3. Student observations on RAU's USPs

- They are studying extra-curricular courses with professors from all over the world;
- Great to have so many courses in English;
- Lots of opportunities eg to learn Japanese, Chinese, Korean – lots of events;
- Cultural exchanges – lots of opportunities to meet and talk with international students;
- Very open and friendly, right up to the Rector – short distance of power;
- Conferences are held with people from business environments and public institutions;
- Very international curriculum – lots of international content (especially European);



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- RAU gives lots of opportunities for international full-time and Erasmus students to mix but they don't always take the chance to do so;
- Erasmus students felt that compared with other universities, their experience is very good;
- Coordination of Erasmus exchange is really good;
- Lots of compliments in particular for the Exchanges Coordinator and how helpful he is.

#### 14.4. Recommendations

- The impression of the expert team is that RAU has many things to be proud of and is in a good position to recruit more international students. However, it was also our observation that there is a lack of self-confidence in promoting these unique selling points. We recommend that the comments of the team and feedback from students be used in developing a marketing and recruitment campaign to better sell its benefits and many assets;
- In developing the campaign, we recommend a systematic incorporation of student views on what may be the most effective ways of promoting RAU;

### 15. **Challenges and obstacles**

#### 15.1. Observations

One of the key obstacles for RAU in terms of recruiting international students seems to be a lack of confidence in promoting the institution and Romania as an attractive destination. The expert team believes that RAU has many competitive advantages to foster internationalisation and recruit students, but that not enough is being done to promote these. Corporate identity and branding, a marketing and communications strategy, enhanced online presence and better development of the website will be crucial in achieving this. It will also be important to incorporate the views of students and their ability to act as ambassadors for the institution. Academic and administrative staff, employers and alumni can also be used to support this promotional activity.

Not being able to award PhDs is a current obstacle but progress is being made towards this and the team would like to encourage RAU in this endeavour.

National level obstacles are a key concern and specific issues are noted below.

<p><b>National policy – initial recommendations</b></p>
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## 16. Challenges and obstacles at national level

There is a need for the Government to address a number of issues if international student recruitment to Romania is to grow. These lie partly in terms of **Education promotion** but also in the **promotion of Romania as a tourist destination** and in the **administration of international student applications** in the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### 16.1. Education promotion and Promotion of Romania as a study destination

- National branding is needed along with a common approach to promotion. Many other countries offer examples of good practice such as Australia, Brazil, Germany etc.;
- 'If there is a national strategy to recruit international students it's top secret', said one person we interviewed. It has to be fully transparent for universities and for applicants;
- There should be more effective use of international alumni of Romanian universities to 'sell' the benefits of studying in the country.

### 16.2. Administering the system for international admissions

- We were told that the recruitment system is 'unfit for purpose'. There is a need to re-establish the professional association of administrative staff in administering internationalisation processes and for the Ministries to address the issues they raise;
- The system for student admissions should be more transparent.
- The timing of replies to student applications is a major issue. Applications can come in at any time of the year, but universities are not allowed to send them to the Ministry of Education until July. This gives insufficient time for decisions to be taken, students to be informed and for them then to prepare for their travel to Romania. One example was given of a student waiting for 18 months for the outcome of their application;
- The Ministry could give universities access to the NARIC database of educational equivalencies so that they can understand the qualifications of international students from countries they are not used to dealing with;
- It seemed strange to the foreign experts that the admissions process is controlled by the Ministry of Education if the universities are accredited institutions;
- The expert team suggests that either universities should be allowed to decide who to admit or a national entity outside the Ministry of Education be created to deal with student admissions. If subordinated to the Ministry, it should be independent, for example in collaboration with the Rectors' Conference;



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- It would seem sensible for the applicant's credential check to be separate from the security check. These are separate processes and distinct decisions should be made;
- In Romania full programmes can only begin in October. Student recruitment would be assisted if there was a legal amendment to allow a second semester start;
- We were told that students cannot get visas to study English language before the course, only Romanian. This limits recruitment from (especially) non-European countries where lower levels of English may be an issue;
- There needs to be effective collaborative working between government departments and the universities. For example we were led to understand that the Chinese government asked the Ministry of Education for a list of Romanian universities with which Chinese universities might set up partnerships. The Ministry gave this but apparently no private universities were on the list. This is a real setback for RAU because the China Centre needs partnerships. We were left with the view that the task of providing such lists should be the job of the Quality Assurance agency, which presumably would list all accredited institutions.

## Next steps

### Institutional processes for developing the SPM and communication in relation to internationalization with the expert panel

First of all, designation of the core team who will deal with the development and implementation of the future internationalization strategic plan is required from RAU management.

In the process of reviewing and completing the strategic plan, the expert team recommends that the core team has face-to-face consultations with as many representatives of the university community as possible.

Given that this will be a step-by-step process, the expert team recommends, after the core team sets and redefines the goals and operational objectives, that the intermediate results are sent no later than 1 month after the SPM. After that RAU will send the draft strategic plan by 20th March 2015 for the experts' comments.

In the meantime, no later than 14th February 2015, the expert team will send the institutional report and other useful documents to RAU.

The other deadlines and the timeline for having the strategy adopted by the Senate will be re-discussed and agreed with the expert team at the beginning of March.



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No later than 10th April 2015, after the expert team has given feedback on the draft internationalization strategy, the final version will be adopted in the RAU Senate and sent to UEFISCDI.

Any of the experts can be consulted whenever necessary, via email or phone calls, about specific matters at any time during the 3 month period after the SPM. **However, please note that all general communication from RAU about the SPM and the IEMU project should be with the Chair, Adrian Georgescu.**

## Appendices:

1. Romanian-American University Self-Assessment Report
2. SPM program/agenda
3. Materials which can be useful for the university in developing its SPM