ACADEMIC MOBILITY: FUTURE OF HIGHER MEDICAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Academic mobility is one of the mechanisms of modernization of higher education. Today academic mobility is an integral part of the life of the Kazakh National Medical University. The KazNMU has the solid foundation for successful implementation of the Bologna process. Currently the learning process is in three languages, the University has the program for exchange students with the Semipalatinsk State Medical University, faculty members are participating in prestigious Fulbright exchange program.

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"We must try to expand the boundaries of human wisdom, empathy and perception, and there is no way of doing that except through education,"

J. William Fulbright. From remarks on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Fulbright Program, 1976

Kazakhstan universities are striving to modernize the system of higher education, and to achieve that goal in March 2010, Kazakhstan joined the Bologna Declaration, and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan proposed the Concept of academic mobility to the higher educational institutions.

Academic mobility implies participation of graduate students, faculty and university administration in scientific conferences and seminars, in research work in archives and libraries, in trainings in academic institutions throughout the country and abroad.

During the Spring semester 2011 in the framework of academic mobility on the faculty in general medicine, Kazakh National Medical University (KazNMU) hosted ten 2nd year students from the Semipalatinsk State Medical University (SSMU). Two medical universities had a preliminary agreement on curriculum, schedules, conditions for transferring received grades. Students from Semipalatinsk attended lectures and practical sessions, in accordance with the program of KazNMU, and all grades students received for academic achievement were displayed in a separate journal, signed by representatives of the faculty, whose classes they attended, and transferred to the SSMU. In addition to participation in training sessions, students learned about the structure and operation of the KazNMU, and functioning of the Student Government. The administration of the University organized several meeting for exchange students with the dean and representatives of the faculty. Students from Semipalatinsk learned about history and traditions of education at KazNMU, and received a chance to see Almaty. At the end of their exchange program, students were asked to fill a survey, where they mentioned high professional level of the faculty, modern technical equipment of the educational process and of the library, good organization of student councils in the dormitory and student government.

At the same time, ten 2nd year KazNMU students were in the Semipalatinsk State Medical University attending classes and learning about lives of their counterparts. At the end of their exchange program students provided a report where they noted that the level of teaching in KazNMU was much higher.

This was the first experience of academic mobility at KazNMU, limited by one week, rather than a semester or an academic year; however, even this short exchange demonstrated the potential for further cooperation within the framework of partnership agreements. Today, this positive experience can be seen as a first step in a multistage

1 Professor Aigul Sapargalieva is a professor at the Department of Pathology. In 2007-8, she received a Fulbright Research Award, administered by the US State Department. For ten months she was doing her research on sudden cardiovascular death at the NYMC, Valhalla, NY.

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http://www.kaznmu.kz
process of academic exchange for students of different years of education and different specialties, attending medical universities across Kazakhstan.

In 2011, the Kazakh National Medical University provided students with another interesting opportunity to see and to learn from world medical specialists. In the framework of the program launched by the Ministry of Education "On Training of Specialists with Graduate and Postgraduate Education," KazNMU invited 94 foreign specialists from 48 world universities to present their master classes and read lectures on different medical subjects. The results of this extremely successful program were concluded during the closing ceremony of "The University Days-2011" by Professor Aykan Akanov, the KazNMU Rector. He underscored that long-term treaties were signed on further cooperation with the American, British, Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian universities directed at starting exchange programs for students and faculty. After implementation of this program, KazNMU was ready to share this experience with other Kazakhstan universities.

As it was mentioned earlier, academic mobility involves not only academic exchanges of students from partner universities, or invitation of foreign professors for our students, but also participation of KazNMU professors in international exchange programs. Currently, the university has two professors – Professor of Pathology Aigul Sapargalieva, and Professor of Traumatology Evgeniya Brusinskaaya, who participated in one of the most prestigious programs of academic mobility, Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program, the program that was established under the legislation introduced by the US Senator J. William Fulbright in 1946. This program that annually awards 900 grants to the foreign visiting scholars chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential is sponsored by the US Government. In Kazakhstan, Fulbright program is administered by the U.S. Embassy and coordinated by a wonderful person and a great professional Asiyat Suleimenova.

During Professor Aigul Sapargalieva stay in the US she had chance to focus her work in three major areas:

• Scientific work on the project "Morphological aspects of heart remodeling during the sudden cardiac death of young adults," research in the library and writing articles;
• Participation in the teaching process, including learning about the system of medical education at the Department of Pathology;
• Participation in scientific conferences in New York, Washington DC, and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Participation in the Fulbright Program allowed Professor Aigul Sapargalieva to change her attitude to the educational process and motivated her after returning from the U.S. to write a project "Modernization of the Department of Pathological Anatomy" (2008). In addition, Professor Aigul Sapargalieva proposed introduction of the new course on "Clinical morphology" for 6th year students in the new format that included clinical and anatomical conferences. Professor Aigul Sapargalieva also developed and implemented her own course for medical interns “Expert evaluation of medical documents," which allows to realize the principles of a competent approach to medical education, namely, medical knowledge, practical skills, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, basic knowledge of organization of the health system. Communication with American counterparts allowed to re-evaluate the role of the professor in the learning process, when he or she becomes a mentor, or a senior fellow, but always a colleague and professional.

Thus, academic mobility, as a way of modernization of higher education has become an integral part in the life of the Kazakh National Medical University. Today the administration of KazNMU laid a solid foundation for the successful implementation of the Bologna process:

1. Several subjects at the Faculty of General Medicine are taught in three languages (Kazakh, Russian and English).
2. Faculty of General Medicine started implementation of the program of student exchange with Semipalatinsk State Medical University.
3. University professors were invited to different regions of Kazakhstan to conduct master classes on socially significant medical issues, including “Treatment of patients in post-transplant period” (Shymkent,Taraz), ”Clinical and morphological aspects of cerebrovascular diseases" (Karaganda, Astana).
4. For the past four years 6 students and 14 teachers of the Faculty of General Medicine took part in international conferences, seminars, trainings, and summer schools.
5. Faculty representatives of the department of General Medicine participated in the most prestigious international exchange programs, including Fulbright program and moreover, six representatives of the faculty applied for this program in 2012.