INTERNATIONALIZATION AT PENN STATE LAW

The purpose of the Bolashak-sponsored internship at Penn State University is to investigate the international cooperation instruments in the US higher education system and to gain practical and technical higher skillsets to promote education internationalization through hands-on active engagement in this area at a large public research university in the United States.

In accordance with the purpose of this internship the following major tasks of the internship include:

- To study Penn State’s internationalization strategy of global engagement networks (GENs);
- To examine Penn State services for international students and U.S. governmental regulations;
- To explore Penn State’s international risk management strategy;
- To investigate Penn State’s education abroad programs and advising;
- To examine Penn State Law’s international recruiting and marketing strategies;
- To design innovative programs for international lawyers;
- To master Penn State’s Law’s strategy for online education geared towards an international audience.

Consequently, the internship supposes two stages of research, one is to acquire practical skills through the opportunity to engage in the work that designs innovative programs for the incoming students in Penn State Law faculty and the other to explore the international collaboration instruments work at Penn State University at Global programs Office.

The two-stage internship suggests 12 months of intensive studying the management of internationalization efforts at the International Department of Penn State Law and at the Penn State Global Office.

The results of the first three months of this internship will be presented in this paper. First, the definition of internationalization proposed by Knight will be introduced (Knight, 2004) who interprets this phenomenon as the process of unifying international, intercultural or global elements in the purpose, functions or delivery in higher education. In addition, the forms of realization of internationalization depend on the priorities, culture, history, politics and resources (Knight, 2004).

In order to start the implementation of the set goals it was necessary to analyze the mission, vision and strategy of Penn State Law and its internationalization strategy. Assistant Dean of Graduate and International Programs at the law school, Caroline Sheldon pinpoints five basic strategic objectives to attract international student numbers in the strategic plan for graduate and international programs. One of the fundamentals is to increase the international profile of international graduate students in Penn State Law (Strategic plan, 2013); further, to enlarge the population of law graduate students maximizing up to 70-80 students per academic year; to recruit government sponsored students, develop networks so that networks can recruit, enhance faculty engagement for recruiting, expand program offerings around language based on demand, target countries with large sponsoring capacity, target top universities and institutes grow into essential methods for implementing the set objectives. The Graduate and International Programs established and developed a chain of recommended actions which became clear during the internship period shown in Picture 1.

Additionally, there are strong continuous market strategy directions the Assistant dean relies upon:

- Virtual open houses for potential applicants and admitted international students;
- Recruiting trips to strategic countries;
- Web-based marketing;
- EducationUSA newsletters;
- LLM brochures;
- Comprehensive information on the web-site.

Moreover, targeting companies and Education USA, reaching out to other Penn State units, such as the College of Education and Applied Linguistics, working with Penn State representatives in different countries and the Penn State alumni network enhance the outreach efforts of the Penn State Law graduate international programs. Thus, the
above activities have resulted in the increase of international students which are represented in Table 1.

The table shows the significant rise in the international students’ population. The summer program based on 3-week Intensive Introduction to U.S. Law gained its attractiveness due to its components provided by highly qualified and outstanding professors on U.S. Business Law, Constitutional Law, and Intro to U.S. Law and analysis. Another factor for the popularity it has been opened to non-LLMs, and includes field trips to local courts and Washington, D.C.

Apart from the strategy, there arose a necessity of conducting a survey to investigate strengths and weaknesses of the LLM program for international students. The survey was scientifically based and anonymous. 50 LLM students responded. There were 15 countries presented in the survey. The basic concept of the questionnaire was proposed by the administration which initially was oriented on market survey but later was enhanced for purposes of the internship research.

Survey respondents were predominately male (by 68%), which is common for surveys among international students (Boston College CIHE and GO group, 2014). The average age of the respondent was 25 years. In terms of countries of origin, there can be found some tendency, for instance, 32% of respondents come from China, while 12% of respondents originate from Saudi Arabia as well as from Norway. Such dominating number of Chinese and Saudi Arabian students can be found at other universities worldwide. Regarding Norway, Penn State Law has consistent and solid collaboration with Oslo and Bergen Universities. The rest of students come from other countries including: Kazakhstan, France, UAE, Turkey, Iraq, India, Italy, South Africa, Kuwait, Brazil, Liberia and Nigeria.

The results of the survey on English language proficiency demonstrated that most of the students had Upper-Intermediate Level (72%) which meets the requirements of admission. There is a balance between how the respondents learnt about Penn State Law: friends and relatives (30%), website (24%) and 24% of respondents gave their own answer underlining collaboration (16%) and sponsorship (8%). Thus, the “word of mouth” way of exchanging information about the university takes a leading position, however social internet platforms are not far behind. It is remarkable that Penn State Law endeavors to enhance its partnership with strategic partners.

With respect to strengths of Penn State Law, respondents pointed out the professionalism of academic staff and its high quality (34%); students who emphasized the campus, facilities and library (22%), the same percentage noted the curriculum of the LLM program (22%). Others highlighted the friendly welcoming environment (8%), reputation (8%), networking (6%), perspectives in career (6%) and research (4%).

Most importantly, 28% of the international students underlined that in their opinion Penn State Law does not have any weaknesses. The rest of students reported that there are some minor disadvantages: program (10%), location (8%), reputation (6%), lower food and transport availability (4%) and perspectives (4%).

Moreover, students stress that faculty provides a great amount of language support which is very important for successful process of study. Encompassed by language assistance, respondents indicated a possibility to interact with well-known professors and American students.

To sum up, internationals evaluate Penn State Law for outstanding high quality achievements in dealing with international cohort of students.

Based on personal observation, which is in line with that of international students, the program management is successful. In the course of the internship the Assistant Dean arranged a number of productive meetings to socialize for professional and personal gain with faculty members from different departments, as well as university staff responsible for internationalization and education. Furthermore, I took part in a couple of conferences on advising and teaching topics, participated in an International Trade Conference, in a Penn State conference on Higher Education Changing Landscape and two workshops on project management and fundamentals of academic writing. The outcome of those activities turned into synthesized work on internationalization of higher education. As part of the internship, Kazakh students at the law school and I organized a cultural event at the law school to share Kazakh culture with American and other international Penn State Law students, as well as faculty and staff. The event called "Kazakh night" devoted to Kazakhstan, included live Kazakh music, a traditional dance performance by Kazakh Penn State students, as well as Kazakh food and an exhibition of typical Kazakh art. Over fifty students and faculty attended.

Considering all the factors contributing to successful internationalization of Penn State Law it can be featured:

- Strong strategy plan for internationalization;
- Well-researched market strategy;
- High quality LLM program;
- Involvement of academic staff in Internationalization;
- Stable Strategic partners;
- Language support from Applied Linguistics Department;
- Friendly and open communication with international students (as all students noted);
- Interaction of internationals both with academic staff and American students;
- Cultural and sport events, etc.

In conclusion, based on three sources of evidence, the Penn State Law strategic report for internationalization, the survey data and the personal consideration Penn State Law can be deemed as a successful example for conducting internationalization in higher education institution. Eventually, thorough and critical analysis will be introduced as a final research paper on Internationalization of Penn State University. Possible topics for future research may include the law school’s internationalization strategy with regard to establishing meaningful partnerships with law schools abroad, with regard to supporting international research of faculty and building the international profile of American students.

In addition we would like to express my hope that our Education System would be more internationalized if the Bolashak would remain implementing training program for teaching faculty further. It has been 21 year since 1993 when the Scholarship was established and we at Nazarbayev University positive about Bolashak Scholarship and its strategy in a long run.

REFERENCES:
Bysiewicz, K., Sheldon, C., Hong, S. ‘Strategic Plan and Progress Report’ (2013), Penn State Law Graduate and International Programs
Boston College CIHE and GO group (2014) ‘The rationale for sponsoring students to undertake international study: an assessment of national student mobility scholarship programmes’, Study by British Council and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD)