

WEBINAR: “US-RUSSIA COOPERATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: ENGAGING IN PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUE”

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Svetlana Filiatreau: ...and finally, we would like to promote engagement of universities with their local communities and regions, to implement community-centered projects. And in that regard, our group is unique - in the unique position as you know from looking at the Social Expertise Exchange program’s website, you can see that Higher Education basically has an opportunity to serve most of our working groups. Now I will pass the microphone to Mark from last year’s project, and I’m muting myself here. Thank you.

Mark Johnson: Yes hello everybody. My name is Mark Johnson and I’ve been involved in this work for quite a number of years. I assume our colleagues at Eurasia are going to pull up what’s being viewed on the desktop, is that correct? And can you pull up my slides there, because unfortunately I have a very primitive computer.

I’ve been involved in the work both with various U.S. government agencies; the process of which was kind of reinvented. Of course, before 1991 it had been very kind of strictly regulated, it had equal numbers of people had to go in both directions, vetted by the Soviet government obviously on that side, and then in 1991, all of those existing structures sort of fell apart very abruptly, and significant numbers of people could begin to exchange in both directions, often very quickly, and I was involved in some of those early, kind of setting up review mechanisms

with the US Embassy in Moscow in the 1990s, and then I've been involved both in US government – I can continue while we wait for the slides.

Part of the report – the report represents the guidebook – we tried to keep it succinct so that it was more useful, but it's part of a larger body of work, and I know that Erin has worked on similar issues as well, and we've been looking at kind of some of the historical background to this. There was a great wave of both US government and international fellowships and opportunities in the 1990s. There was also of course a significant amount of self-funded academic mobility and international travel and study abroad in the 1990s, and frankly all of that remains under researched. We have some sense of the US government programs and the effects and the volume of that. We have very little sense of the number of students and scholars coming out of the former Soviet Union who were self-funded, or who came into permanent positions in the West, whether in Europe or the United States or Canada or elsewhere. Then there was a shift in the late 1990s, the US government funding began to decline – that accelerated after 2001, when much of the US government funding sort of shifted into the Middle East and the Islamic world – but that was replaced by a sort of significant new wave of investments coming in from two directions, one from European, European Commission and TESIS and other programs, but for our purposes, perhaps more interestingly a number of US private foundations, very prominent foundations in the United States especially the MacArthur Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York became very involved in the reform of Russian universities. Those programs unfortunately now have also wound down, and so we find ourselves in a new –if we could proceed to the second slide please?

So again, US partners and participants in the United States have to recognize that the situation is fundamentally changed. The realities of the 1990s - in which Russian universities were sort of catastrophically underfunded, and facilities were disintegrating, and they were desperately spinning off autonomous enterprises and for-profit units – have really changed, and we're in a new policy environment. SO we are now facing a fundamental reorganization of the Russian higher educational system as you see on this slide here. We have a top tier, of by American standards, recent standards perhaps in some states more than others, federal funding going into the national champions – most obviously Moscow State and St. Petersburg State, but also the national research universities. This is now accelerating in what is called the “5-100” competition, where the government is combing through 15 of those top institutions, with the idea that 5 will be elevated into the top 100 of global university rankings. My understanding of the debate around that is that policy makers are actually realistic that they probably will not get into the top 100, but at least they'll crack the top 2 or 300 of – you know the Times higher ed rankings or others. And the recent news that I have seen, is that they announced 4 that are in the leading position, that are most successfully reforming their internal management and their research productivity and their international profile, and interestingly those are all outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg, they are Tomsk Polytechnic, Tomsk State, ITMO in St. Petersburg and I've forgotten the 4th now.

So a second tier of projects, of fundamental reorganization, are the federal universities, these are being consolidated out of formerly specialized institutions. This began as early as 2006 in Krasnoyarsk and Rostov. The idea is to create really kind of very large and sort of regionally

dominant higher education institutions and training institutions, with an explicit goal of revitalizing and rewiring the labor markets and the relations with industry in significant regions of the Russian Federation. Now the federal university project has been a little more politically complicated, its reputation is a little more mixed, I think, in Russia as I'm sure our colleagues can speak to, and it also has an obviously an overtly political dimension in that one of the federal universities is in the Far Northeast, in Yakutia, there's another in Stavropol in the North Caucasus, and now there is a new one, as I understand it, in Crimea, with all of the political implications of that. We need to be attentive to the fact that Russian universities are aligning with the Bologna process – more successfully in some cases than others – and yet nonetheless we do need to be attentive to that, and part of that of course entails adopting and aligning to global quality assurance standards, and the use of that sort of language around quality assurance and the review of academic programs. Now the Russian government has also just recently announced much more aggressive efforts to triage the system, to kind of close down or forcibly consolidate weaker, smaller, regional higher education institutions. This is partly an effort to improve quality in the system and it's also an effort to kind of take up the redundant capacity in the system as the age cohort coming into higher education declines.

So a few important things to keep in mind, again especially for US partners: that this really is changing and changing very quickly – we have to kind of come to grips with the fact that this phase, the golden age, when there was significant US government and foundation funding for this is really over. And historically, looking back at that period, it really was remarkable. It was an unprecedented, international, multilateral effort to transform the higher educational system in this part of the world, but those particular sources of funding have really fundamentally either ended or wound down significantly, and we simply have to be creative and recognize that we need to look to other sources. There are also, at least in the United States perhaps more than Europe a little, we have to be attentive to US sanctions. There are clearly export control issues around particular arenas of cooperation. So, for example, here at Madison there's a lot of interest and there's some longstanding cooperation with institutions in Russia around nuclear medicine, and medical physics and medical engineering, but we have to be very careful now given the nuclear dimension of some of that. And we have to be at least attentive, I think, to the reality of potential media or political backlash to these kinds of projects. We have encountered some of that. UW-Madison also has a large partnership with Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan and we have received some – what I frankly think is sort of well-deserved – criticism in the local press here in Madison.

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... You need to be wary of unscrupulous recruiters, you know, recruiting international students just purely for revenue generation or the presence of low-quality higher educational providers, often online, or for profit providers and the kind of regulatory gray area can sometimes be hazy around this. Russia is reasonably good about this, but there's often some misunderstanding about this. The second point is of course also has to do with the frequent misunderstandings about accreditation, and the complexities of accreditation in the United States – the way in which the differences between both regional accreditors and more narrowly profiled professional accreditation agencies. And as we've just seen with the scandal in Pakistan, the enormous

presence of diploma mills and kind of questionable accreditation agencies in this world, so my only point there is that Russian universities need to be attentive to the quality of their potential partners and to the specifics of accreditation.

Now the third point – I think it's an important one. It's a little prosaic, and yet incredibly important, which is the administrative capacity on both sides. And we often, you know, there have to obviously be strong faculty champions, there have to be researchers out in front of this, and you know professors, and instructors, and instructional staff being exchanged, and yet we often forget that these partnerships often rise and fall or don't last long if we do not have sort of serious professional capacity to sustain them on both sides. And what I'm especially interested in hearing more about would be to hear more about would be how the new proposal, the new project from this year's group actually seeks to address exactly that issue. So that's at least my understanding based on what I've seen of it.

And then the final point is this idea about the kind of risks of mismatch - the high expectations, the exchange of MOUs, and grand hopes, and hopes that all this can happen – and then the difficulty, however well-intentioned we may be on both sides, the difficulty of kind of following through. And again, we may have great hopes to cooperate together between institutions, but it's objectively hard. And it's especially hard given all of the biases about Russian universities and misconceptions from the 1990s in the United States, and especially given the two points I make in the slide above about the sort of lack of foreign language capacity and the lack of administrative capacity. And again I don't mean this to sound critical - this is, you know, people do remarkable things with remarkably small staffs, as we see at, you know, Bard College, which punches way above its weight in this world, with a remarkably small team, and yet it has a tremendous presence and a sophisticated presence in this work. And yet as I'm sure our colleagues from Bard will attest, that is hard and hard to sustain. Next slide please.

Ok, so this is my final point here. There are, in effect, new opportunities here, we need to be realistic but not pessimistic. I would argue that it's a time for realism and cautious optimism about future prospects, but I do think it's very much there. Fulbright is continuing, thankfully, there are other new US opportunities – we're going to hear about the UPP later in the webinar. There is in fact – and I think we need to take these second and third and fourth points very seriously – there is potential Russian funding for faculty exchanges and research cooperation. The standards are going to be much higher; the expectations are going to be much higher for sort of serious deliverables out of that cooperation. We have encountered some of this in some of the work that I have done with the Higher School of Economics that has been very fruitful, and I teach once a year at HSE, and yet it's very clear that given the nature of the funding they're receiving, that that work has to result in peer-reviewed journal publications that are counted in particular citation indexes. So in other words, they understand very clearly what the mechanisms are of international university rankings, and they are willing to invest, you know, university resources and institutional resources in this cooperation, but there have to be very clear results and very clear, you know, outcomes of published research from that work. So there is potential Russian funding, now, especially from those top 15 or 30 universities. I personally think that even beyond the national research universities there are opportunities in the federal universities that have not been adequately explored. I think some very innovative work is being done around

the Urals Federal University, the Far East, and others, some tremendously innovative work around social work and social innovation in Stavropol, at the North Caucasus Federal University that I know the University of Oregon is involved in, so I do think – and this is a shift in the policy environment that Americans may have a hard time getting their head around – it may well be that we if we can really enter into this as real peers, as real sort of peer-to-peer professional dialogue, that our Russian colleagues - if we've had access to resources for the past 10 or 20 years, our Russian colleagues may now have access to resources to continue this work.

The third point is that there is Russian funding for graduate fellowships, especially in the STEM fields, but some social science fields as well. Now they are a little particular about where they will place those people, and there are also several complications around that, as I'm sure our American colleagues are aware – for example, to come here to UW-Madison, they would have to go through and be admitted through the regular admissions process, there are no special arrangements that can be made even if they are fully funded, and unfortunately – you know every state is different in the United States – but we have a particular clause that we cannot give any kind of tuition remission or any kind of special favor or advantages to any particular international student, even if they are fully funded. So the complexities of that vary from state to state, and yet there are significant opportunities for the placement of these very high-powered, very impressive young Russian graduate students in STEM fields.

Now that raises one of my final points, which is that we often have a mismatch – and we deal with this here, at UW-Madison it's very vividly clear – that the people here who are most interested in Russia, have the most experience in Russia, tend to be in foreign languages, in Slavic literature, in history, political science, perhaps economics. And the times have changed, and what our Russian colleagues are especially interested in are science, technology, engineering, and entrepreneurship, and we have a kind of mismatch between the faculty interests on the US side and where the real cutting edge of what the Russian interests are, and that opens up a whole question that I think we might discuss in the rest of the webinar. Second to the last point there – there is keen interest in cooperation and technology transfer and entrepreneurship. You see this especially in the EURECA program of the US-Russia Foundation. And the final point – I do think there is enormous potential, and we saw much of this on display at the Bard conference back in January of last year, there were some very innovative programs that were discussed and demonstrated to us where the partners are using sort of very innovative online technologies, they have hybrid and blended courses that can reduce the expense of physical exchanges, where you say you do part of the course or part of the degree program online, and then have an intensive two-week or four-week in-person component or face-to-face component, and I do – we saw some very innovative examples of that at the seminar last January, and I think that also has tremendous potential.

So to wrap this up, I would say that the context is changed, we have to be realistic about what the opportunities are, and yet I really do think there is significant potential for US-Russian cooperation in some of the areas we've talked about, and I look forward to hearing from our colleagues in the rest of the session.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Thank you Mark. And I wanted to take this opportunity knowing that you and Erin co-authored the book, and that Erin may need to leave the session very soon, I wonder

if there are questions for you, and maybe for both of you, and Erin can step in and answer questions as well. Erin, are you still in?

Erin Weeks-Earp: Hi Svetlana, I'm here and I would be happy to if there are any questions or following up later is fine too. I do have to step out in a minute.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Ok. I'm just wondering. What's the capacity to receive questions?

Mark Johnson: Even if we don't take many questions now, I'm certainly happy to engage after the webinar as well.

Svetlana Filiatreau: I don't see any hands, so I think we're going to move on to the next presenter, or two presenters. And let me just provide a brief overview about this year's project. Actually, it's one of two projects. Our two fellows this year, Brian and Ekaterina explored this idea of establishing the US-Russian professional network whether to – because the question of feasibility of establishing a university-to-university network didn't seem to be – having traction. And what we discovered through conversations, and then posed this question to our fellows, is that potentially, maybe it's worth looking into cooperation between professionals in higher education in specific fields. So with that, I will give the microphone to Bryan, and Bryan can talk about his project, and then Ekaterina can then talk about her findings on the US side. Thank you.

Bryan Billings: Hello I'm Bryan Billings, Eurasian Program Manager for Bard College.

Maria Reissaus: And in the meantime, I think we did receive a question. This is Maria Reissaus, the Communications Manager for SEE. And let me just quickly switch to the chat. And it was from Susan Gallagher, who asked Erin about her background and role in the project. If Erin you can maybe speak about that for a second while Bryan is getting set up.

Erin Weeks-Earp: Yeah sure. So I joined the work group – the SEE Higher Education work group – on the invitation of the former chair in their second year, and I joined because I was studying higher education in Russia at Teachers College Columbia University, and a colleague of mine was on the group, and another colleague was a former professor in the group from Bard College. I attended Bard College and Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg in its first years of operation, so I had some experience both as a student in Russia and as an administrator. After being a student I was a coordinator for American Councils in St. Petersburg doing the Russian language and arts program, and then as a researcher, as an academic I studied the higher education system and training of teachers. So I really joined the group late in the game, but I was able to attend the conference that was mentioned at Bard College, and really a lot of the content that we drew on for this booklet was produced during the work sessions and conference sessions and panels at the conference - in January 2014, right? - at Bard College.

Mark Johnson: Erin also stepped in on my behalf - I had a draft of the guidebook, but I was being swallowed alive by administrative responsibilities, and Erin stepped in and really assisted with kind of recapping it, adding a lot of very new and useful material, and making it I think much more reader-friendly. So really, it's a co-authored production and I appreciate Erin's contribution very much.

Erin Weeks-Earp: And Susan, I think I've been kind of behind-the-scenes the whole time, but I've lived in Russia many years, and I believe there's a lot of potential for collaboration in higher education between the United States and Russia, and there always will be. So no matter what the political constraints, I think there's a lot of good work to be done, and plenty of people who are ready to do it. So we should keep in touch if you are interested in continuing these collaborations, these projects.

Maria Reissaus: Fantastic, thank you, Erin. Bryan, are you ready to take it away?

Bryan Billings: So I'll introduce myself. I'm Eurasian Program Manager for Bard College. Erin just mentions that she went to Bard, and she was the first student ever from the United States to attend Smolny College, which is an 18-year collaboration now with St. Petersburg State University. And Erin was very brave being sent there by herself – I think in '99 – and we award Bard College degrees to all graduates of Smolny College, all BA graduates, so this year I think there's 122 graduates that will be done in three weeks' time. I also helped put together the US-Russia Joint/Dual Degree Conference that Mark discussed in 2014, and there's been a long-standing idea in the community of collaborating universities, specifically with the help of Eurasia Foundation, to put together some sort of association of these collaborating institutions. So I'd like to thank Irina Arzhanova from the National Training Foundation who hosted me in Moscow and Svetlana for her help and mentorship during the fellowship. I spent two weeks in Moscow and started looking at Russian educational associations – how they work, what their purpose is, how they're funded, the driving forces, structure, to try to understand how these work and how they could be useful for US and Russian institutions that work together.

There's quite a few associations. Many of them do not fit the mold of US associations. For example, what you can see on your screen now, these general university associations – these are very large associations; they are top-down, many working very closely with the Ministry of Education. They might be lobbying groups, they might be groups that just work with the Ministry of Education, or the Рособнадзор, to make sure that they're meeting requirements from the Ministry of Education, but as the list goes on and on, as you can see here, there's general, there's regional – I didn't look at regional – there's topical, there are general associations here that don't seem to actually function, they exist on the internet, but there's nothing else available on these associations, so from this list, this is not an exact list of every association that exists, but I began focusing on associations that I could find more information on. One of these is the Association of Leading Universities. So this is an association that was founded by St. Petersburg State University about 5 years ago, that brings together the top Russian universities. What does that mean? Mark was discussing how universities have been reformulated in recent years. This brought together the two “special universities” in Russia – Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University – the federal universities, of which there are 9, now I believe there's 10 with Crimea added, and the national research universities. They later added a few more universities. So it's quite a large association, but the driving force behind this association is St. Petersburg State University. So it seems that [unintelligible] this institution and it's a way of working with the Ministry of Education to meet Ministry requirements, from what I understood from my research - so not the type of association that would really work well for US-Russian partnership.

The Association of Global Universities has a very specific goal, which is to meet the goals of the 5 in 100 Project that was also just discussed. So there's 15 institutions that are in the Association of Global Universities. They are working very closely together, they have working groups to meet requirements to raise their international rankings. And they seem to work very well together, they're very elite, but they do make information available on their website to all other institutions who want to see what they're doing, what their findings are, how they're moving toward this goal of 5 in 100.

And then I also looked at the Russian Association of Private Institutions of Higher Education. So there's another issue here, which is that the Ministry of Education's also cracking down a bit on private institutions. So the difference between the United States and Russia, as I assume most people on this webinar are aware, is that education – higher education is pushed by the government in the Russian Federation. There are private institutions. The private institutions have been getting a lot of pressure from the Ministry of Education. So this association has actually become very important as of late, as they try to work with both Росособнадзор, which is the Russian educational surveilling committee, I guess, how you'd translate it, to make sure that these private institutions are meeting the educational standards set by the Ministry of Education, so that they are not closed down. So they also have a very specific goal – to work together, to stay together, so that there are private institutions and that they survive the changing educational landscape in Russia.

So these are three – these are from general university associations – three very different models. You have an overreaching, the Association of Leading Universities, this is a very large association with the idea of being an association of the top schools. It wasn't really very clear to me, other than lobbying and working directly with the Ministry of Education, what their functions are. The Association of Global Universities, as I said: very specific tasks, works very closely together, it's not open to other institutions. And the Association of Private Institutions, also a very specific task: keep these institutions alive, making sure they meet the requirements set by the Russian government.

Then I looked at two discipline-based university associations: the Association of Russian Law Schools, which is housed at Moscow State University, and the Association of Leading Institutions of Economics and Management, which was founded by the Higher School of Economics. So I tried to understand how these associations that are topical work, and what their purpose is. So the Association of Russian Law School works very much like a US association. Law schools get together, it's funded through dues paid by institutions, they host conferences, they publish proceedings from their conferences, they share research – in my opinion, very similar to a Western association. However, not really a driving force in law education in Russia. There are interested institutions, they get together, the number of institutions that actively participate is much smaller than the number of member institutions. The economics and management association has a very different function, which is it tries to push the gamut on this type of education in Russia, how to advance economics and management education in Russia. Taking elite schools – again, it's an elite group – working together with the Ministry of Education to try and ensure quality, move the teaching of these subjects forward, meet a higher standard. Whereas the Russian law schools is open to any law school that would like to pay dues

and participate, the Leading Institutions of Economics and Management is by invite only, and they want to be the institutions pushing this type of education - which is similar to the final association that I looked at, which was the Association for Law Education. Also at Moscow State University, down the hall from the Association of Russian Law Schools, but very different. This is an organization that works with an elite group of law faculties in the Russian Federation, with law firms and employers, with the Ministry of Education, to set the standard for law education. So there's a very clear driving force behind the Association for Law Education and the Association of Economics and Management – they want to push this type of education, improve it, raise the standard, set quality control. As I said there are many other associations out there...

Svetlana Filiatreau: We will make this information available, yes.

Bryan Billings: And there's a lot of information available on the web. There's another association that seems to work very well together, that there's not a lot of information about, which is very elite, which is called "Клуб 9", the Club of 9 – these are the 9 federal universities. Now there's 10, but as there's not that much information about Клуб 9, it's a password-protected site, this is where federal universities get together to discuss their issues. So they have something to talk about. Which is very similar to – and without knowing much about how Клуб 9 works - Клуб 9 is about these federal universities that are conglomerates. These are regional universities that were pushed together to form larger universities, but they have something in common in that they are all going through the same process. This perhaps is more similar to what we're discussing in US-Russian association, in that there's dissimilarities between all of the collaborations between US and Russian institutions, whether they're dual degree, or other types of collaboration between 2 institutions, sometimes 3 institutions but there's a common thread in that these US-Russian collaborations deal with many of the same issues. So, unfortunately, I don't have much information about Клуб 9, but this is an association that seems to be the type of association – this is an at-will association, the rectors got together, thought they should talk about some of the things they're working on - which would perhaps be a similar situation to a US-Russian association for these partnerships. What I can say through my research is these associations work to varying degrees, to varying degrees of success, they're often driven by one institution, funding comes from individual members, rectors are often the driving force behind joining an association or staying in an association, so it's dissimilar to US associations where institutions and individuals can join and they operate in very different ways. For example, from the list here, looking at the Association of Classical Universities, they don't publish proceedings, they don't publish documents, it's not like a US association, whereas the law association as I mentioned does.

Svetlana Filiatreau: And I think, you know, it's a good segue into what Ekaterina discovered in the US, and the question was how do we, with so many dissimilarities, how do we find the way for professional cooperation, whether it's formal networks, informal networks, what would it look like and what can we do. So with that, looking at the clock, we are running a little bit over, I would like to pass the mic to Ekaterina. Bryan, you can be on standby if there are any questions. That would be great.

Bryan Billings: Yes, certainly.

Ekaterina Petrianina: Thank you. Yes I think that's perfect.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in this webinar, and I want to quickly present the, watching the clock like Svetlana said, the results of our fellowship with my colleague from European University since it is very [unintelligible] and to... What we did, our aim was to research the associations in the US that are somehow connected with the higher education. And we were focusing mostly on two associations, which are NAFSA and NCURA. I think that all of the participants know what these associations are, but just in case, I would like to tell that NAFSA is the Association of International Educators and that NCURA is the National Association of Research Administrators. And they are both very different, partly with the fact that NAFSA was established as a government funded organization and NCURA was more or less a volunteer project which started as an initiative of just a few professionals who first, as we were told during one of our meetings with the representative of NCURA, who started with gathering in somebody's kitchen. And I don't think that I'm going to read all of the information about both associations to continue, it is just a short summary of our research because there are more details in the report of our results of researching these two associations.

But what I want to mention is that during our meetings with the representatives of NAFSA and NCURA, we found out that they are both interested in international cooperation of course, and in cooperation with Russia in particular. But I would like to say that representatives of NCURA were a little bit more interested in cooperation with Russia, because NAFSA told us that they are open to such cooperation, but if it were initiated by the Russian side. So, for example the Ministry of Education or some universities should start, or maybe the Eurasia Foundation should start to approach them with such an opportunity, and they are ready to help. While the representatives of NCURA said that they really want, that they are interested in initiating such projects and looking for new ways of cooperation.

And based on our research, we were also with my colleague Polina, discussing the ideas and the backgrounds of Russian universities and trying to see how we can start maybe similar associations in Russia, or maybe join international associations. And we found out the following: that now might be a really good time to start such an association in Russia because international organization is a hot topic in higher education and the Ministry of Education is supporting it and the leadership of the universities is leading international organizations into the global strategy of the universities. And so, as Mark said previously, it might be a time of cautious optimism.

But there are also some problems, and the problems start with the university leadership, because even though young educational professionals are among the most motivated and they really want to aim for their professional development and the development of the whole sphere of international education, the management team of most Russian universities is still quite old fashioned. And the university leadership often doesn't understand the necessities of such professional growth of the professionals, international education, or research administrators. And they don't support bottom-up initiatives, and like Bryan said, they have several associations in Russia, but most of them are of Vice-Rectors or Rectors and other leadership positions of the universities.

And what we now need, in our opinion, is to start some kind of association or network of professionals, not the whole universities, not the Rectors, Vice-Rectors, because we need some particular cases of cooperation between the Russian and US sides. That is why we brainstormed with Polina, and with Svetlana too, some ideas of how to start such a professional network. And of course, there is the way of NAFSA – we can approach the Ministry of Education with an idea to start such an association, but that also involves certain problems, and this is the long way and there a lot of – it needs some additional research, and we all understand that it might be very difficult and maybe not as effective as starting with an informal network of young professional people instead of starting an official network from the very beginning.

And so we decided that, at least at the beginning, there is no reason to distinguish international educators from research administrators. Because both of them usually have similar activities, do similar things, and they cooperate and once cooperation, for example the cooperation between US and Russia is started in the sphere of international education; research administrators can step in later and start their own cooperation basing on the best practices of international education cooperation [unintelligible] maybe student mobility. And what we also decided that we should develop the existing cases of cooperation between the Russian and American sides, but as you know the cooperation that is based only on some personal contacts can be very vulnerable, and that's why we should approach universities on a decent level, starting from middle managers of course but also then maybe approach the heads of universities too. We should attract wider, more middle managers to such network, and the way to do that can be adding some materials that can help them with their career building, and maybe some resources that help them with their everyday work. And this was based on our talks with NCURA and the model of inter-global forum. We thought that it might be a good idea to include some informal forums where middle managers, educators, research administrators can find some contacts overseas and start and maybe ask for advice on how to approach universities with their ideas of cooperation. Or just find contacts that are interested in similar things that they are.

And that's why we decided that there is already a platform that has realized some of the ideas that we were brainstorming, and this is a [unintelligible] of the UPP program which I believe will be told about later a little bit, and this Eurasia Foundation project, such projects as UPP or SEE can be a basis for developing cooperation, for both sides, for both international educators and research administrators. But for this we need to develop this platform by adding some information because information is the key and most of the cooperation doesn't happen because the sides don't have enough information about each other, about how it is done, for example, in Russian universities, whether they are open for cooperation or not, what they should do. And the Russian side has the same problem, they don't have enough information about the American side and they are not sure whether it is a possibility to cooperate. But we believe that the possibilities are actually there. And also, as I said, we should add a forum to the UPP website to provide communication space for the professionals to have them find contacts, get their questions answered, start discussions, maybe share best practices. Also, another key is funding, because always people are looking for money. And Russia and America are situated not very close to each other and the state funding to start projects together. But it should not be exclusively

Eurasia Foundation funding of course. But we can publish on this platform some funding opportunities from other governments for example, or other programs such as Fulbright. And make it one platform where international educators and research administrators can find all the information about all the opportunities that are there.

And of course to start this, whether this is an official network or unofficial network of universities, there should be a strong theme. And maybe a good idea would be to start with former fellows of Eurasia Foundation who are now very interested in starting or developing such cooperation, bilateral cooperation, and then expand it to international cooperation not only with American partners, but partners from all around the world, and not only with Russian partners, but with partners from all around the world. And there can be certain things that can attract people to join this network, like I said, publishing some materials, maybe agreeing with NAFSA and NCURA that they can provide some of the materials to people who join this network. Or maybe who subscribe. Or maybe with the opportunity to share among each other. Also there can be webinars like this one and some education opportunities for international educators and research administrators. So there are a lot of things if such an association is started, there are a lot of opportunities for growth of it, for starting some exciting new thing. And what I maybe forgot to mention is that we decided with Elise that maybe it is not useful to start such association only among Russian Universities, maybe there should be a good idea to start with American partners from the very beginning, start as a bilateral association.

And I believe that is all I wanted to tell, if you have any questions, you can contact me later via email. So thank you a lot for your attention and I would like to thank Polina Tazenkova especially because we did all this work together with her.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Thank you Ekaterina. So, we are out of time right now, but we promised that we're going to cover the new bilateral program – US-Russia Partnership Program, that Ekaterina touched on.

Hrach Topalyan: Ok, perfect. So, hello everyone, I am Hrach Topalyan, manager of US-Russia University Partnership Program and today I am here to give you a little background on what University Partnership is and how it works. So, US-Russia University Partnership Program, or we call it UPP, is an initiative for cultural and academic collaboration that connects Russian and US universities and provides support to launch new bilateral partnerships between them. UPP is implemented by Eurasia Foundation in partnership with National Training Foundation in Moscow.

A few words about the objectives of the program: the first objective is to provide US and Russian universities with the opportunity to form linkages for working level collaboration, and to promote and help develop sustainable long-term linkages between those universities which will have a substantial multiplier effect over time. And in order to achieve those objectives, UPP uses two main components. The first component is an online platform for higher education professionals in Russia and United States, basically to network with each other and to search for

potential project partners. Currently we have more than 100 entries in the database, more specifically 121 registries actually. And the second component is a funding competition that offers financial assistance to US and Russian higher education institutions for launching new bilateral partnerships.

The funding competition consists of two stages. The first stage is contact project funding which is 2,500 USD of funding to provide those universities for a one month period to help partners develop a proposal for second stage funding which is linkage project funding. And linkage funding is a larger amount up to 41,000 USD for a period of up to 12 months. This amount is provided for launching an incubation of university partnerships. And those partnerships may cover any academic or professional subject or any partnership framework with some exceptions. For instance, we don't sponsor internships or student exchanges. So a few words about our achievements. On March 2nd, 2015, we received multiple contact funding proposals, and that was the first stage of the funding. We awarded nine of them. And these nine proposals and many other proposals who did not apply for contact funding, submitted linkage proposals on May 18th, which is the second stage of the funding. Currently, we are in the process of reviewing those proposals and we are planning to announce provisional finalists on June 1st. Just to make it clear, you still can apply for linkage funding, even though you don't get the period of the one month contact stage. So those are two independent stages.

So, this is our website, our platform. So, clicking on project database, you will access our online database and you can search for potential partners in the database here. For instance we have several universities who have already registered in our database. And in order to register your project, you should go here – “register your project”, and we have detailed explanation on how to register your project on the database and this is in both languages, in Russian and in English, so it's completely bilingual.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Just a quick question, we had a question from a few scholars here at Mason. They were not sure if all projects need to be registered, or if it is enough to select a potential partner from the list that has already been registered. If you don't have a project in mind, but you can join a partner or if you have a project in mind you can post it and then maybe negotiate with partners – what is the typical approach?

Hrach Topalyan: Yeah, both are typical approaches. We have universities that have project in mind and are registered now in our database, or we have universities that don't have a particular idea but they want to search for a partner and then together with this partner develop a project. So both options work and universities use both options.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Thank you.

Hrach Topalyan: Ok. So, a few words about future opportunities for those who are looking forward to register their projects on our database. Even though both contact and linkage funding stages are over, we are planning to hold another round of similar funding opportunities in fall 2015. In other words, you will be able to apply for contact and linkage funding again in fall. We

don't have dates for the proposal deadlines yet, but will be deciding dates soon. And for that I recommend that you find and like us on Facebook, by searching US-Russia University Partnership - UPP. And you can also subscribe to our newsletter on the UPP website here. And that will be the quickest way to learn about the dates for the fall funding competition. Ok, and I guess that is it. Thank you very much, I will be happy to answer your questions either at the end of the webinar or you can email your questions to upp@eurasia.org. Thank you.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Thank you Hrach. This is all for now. If there are any questions, we ran over 18 minutes, I want to be mindful of everybody's time, but if there are questions, please let us know. All the webinar will be uploaded as well as links to the powerpoint presentations and link to the publication that we shared. If you want to be involved, you want to be a part of working group initiatives, please let us know, we will have contact information on the higher education working group webpage. And as well, as I understand, the UPP webpage will have some information – how to contact the working group. We would like to see more active US presence in the working group.

SEE Staff: Svetlana, it looks like Muriel has a hand up – Muriel, please go ahead.

Muriel Joffe: Ok, I have a question, sort-of comment, then I have an announcement and I don't know how to share the information, so I'm going to ask it here. I'm still confused about the professional networks. Because if the network or the aim of the network is to promote institutional alternately collaboration or research cooperation, then I would look to different organizations than perhaps NAFSA or NCURA, so that's my first question. Because NCURA is an association of the office of sponsored research and that will give you help with grant funds that already exist and have been announced - to tell you how to do it. But the vice presidents for research at the university are usually the people who are more interested in shaping and directing the research of an institution and is more tied to the faculty, so that's my first question.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Well, let me try to answer it, and the answer is – it depends, and it is evolving. We answered this year's project as a group with an idea of institution to institution networks, and as we communicated through the projects, and the fellows embarked on research, it became more clear that professional networks of individual members and people-to-people engagement more along the lines of NAFSA and NCURA and maybe other associations researching in specific fields like Bio and maybe Slavic Studies, just to name a few – is the more feasible way to engage. And for now, as Ekaterina has pointed out, it seems like we may be stepping out in a more informal way rather than formal. As a network that may evolve through conversations.

Muriel Joffe: Ok, so can I make a quick announcement? And then you can tell me where I should email it. Some of you know that I actually manage the Fulbright program in Russia, which dates back to the 1970s. There is a grant for Russian international education administrators, specifically junior level, that is offered and the competition deadline is July 1st. And there are different kinds of international education administrators, so I think the thrust of this award is helping develop student services and study abroad exchanges of students. There is

also a community college administrators' grant. There is also a directory of the Fulbrighters who have had grants both to Russia and from Russia. So I wanted to let you know about the international administrators for my Russian colleagues, so if you wanted, you can apply for that. So, if you tell me where to post the information, I will give you the websites for this.

Svetlana Filiatreau: I think if you can email Elise and me, we will make sure it gets to the UPP website.

Muriel Joffe: Ok. That's fine. Because if we are talking about professional development of international education administrators, it's a source of money [laughs].

Svetlana Filiatreau: Exactly. That's a good opportunity. Thank you, Muriel.

Muriel Joffe: You're welcome.

Svetlana Filiatreau: Any other questions? Well, if we have no more questions, I think we're done. Thank you everyone and we will follow up. There will probably be a survey link that we will share with you. We would like to get your input. And we will share the link to the webinar and other resources with you. Thank you so much and have a good rest of your day and the week.

SEE Staff: Thank you Svetlana, thank you everybody, have a good afternoon!

end recording