



NEW INSTITUTI

Only eight years old, Nazarbayev University (NU), located in Astana, Kazakhstan faces various operational challenges. One of the current priorities is comprehensive internationalisation, including internationalisation of its student body. How can NU best take on this challenge, given its relatively young presence in the field?

In the next eight years, 10% of NU's student body (out of a targeted 8000 students) is expected to be international. Moreover, this priority is in line with the bigger national agenda for higher education –Kazakhstan's international student population achieving 50,000

destination for international students. As of 2017, around 13,000 international students came to study as full-time students. As a young university that has yet to receive accreditation, NU is still working to advance its reputation in the international higher education arena.

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by 2025 (which will comprise about 5% of the total student population in the country). However, attracting international students is quite challenging due to both external (national level) and internal (institutional) factors.

Kazakhstan is a relatively young country and is yet to be established as a study

ENTERING THE FIELD

Big steps have been taken at the country level, such as launching an active recruitment campaign, establishing special state scholarships for international students, continuing development and advancement of campuses facilities, improving existing student visa regulations, *etc.*



ON, BIG PLANS

NU has already taken some measures towards internationalisation. The university has adopted a concept for comprehensive internationalisation, formed strategic partnerships with world-leading universities, and continues taking steps towards programme and institutional accreditation. It continues to audit its existing services and policies to ensure attractive conditions for international students and increase NU's visibility.

The most recent and large-scale initiatives in which NU has engaged include the Asian University Alliance and the University Alliance of the Silk Road. Both networks are partnerships with Chinese universities promoted under the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR). OBOR is a Chinese strategic and economic agenda that seeks to foster connectivity and cooperation between China, Asia, Europe and Africa. It facilitates not

only economic development, but also encourages collaboration in educational and cultural sectors between the participating

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countries to help maintain closer connections between the main implementers of the initiative. One of the key messages of OBOR is that joint efforts in education will also lead to reform and developments at domestic levels.

POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS

Kazakhstan's fortunate position in the heart of Eurasia makes it a strategically

important stop along the Silk Road. Kazakhstan is seen as a bridge connecting China to the rest of the world. In addition, Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech delivered at NU in 2013, in which he announced the One Belt One Road Initiative, made NU one of the most attractive targets for Chinese universities. In response to the political agenda set by President Xi Jinping, the Chinese government developed a special 'Education Action Plan' for OBOR. It aims at increasing cooperation and joint action by the OBOR countries to provide the talent needed to make the Initiative a success. Student exchanges, joint research, credit recognition, sister schools, language courses, and Confucius Institutes and Classrooms are the tools that promote mutual benefits for all participating countries.

A THREE-TIERED ENGAGEMENT

Structurally, NU’s engagement with alliances and member universities happens at three levels – the leadership level (membership in executive council, conferences), the faculty level (research, conferences), and the student level (summer schools, student events). Engagement with Chinese universities at these three levels contributes to the development of three priority areas of NU’s internationalisation agenda: promotion of international diversity and academic mobility; curriculum internationalisation; and strengthening of research collaboration. Benefits of the cooperation include:

- A platform to build ties – activities organised in the framework of cooperation serve as an excellent platform for networking and establishing contacts for productive collaboration;
- An increase in student mobility – NU already has successful joint summer schools with Chinese universities, with the potential for full academic mobility programmes;
- An increased awareness of Kazakhstan in China and of China in Kazakhstan among students – students learn about the country’s economy, culture, politics and education;
- Learning and practicing a new language – collaborative events and summer schools foster language learning and provide a good platform for practice;
- A place to share experiences – universities, leadership, faculty and students share experiences and best practices with each other.

NU’S CURRENT COLLABORATION

Part of collaborative activities with Chinese universities, NU hosted a Silk Road International Summer School, jointly organised by Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Xi’an Jiaotong University, and, collaboratively with Fudan University, held the 11th Youth Innovation Competition on Global Governance on Future Energy and Sustainable Infrastructure. A big advantage of such events is active involvement of students both from NU and partnering universities: students get exposed to another culture and develop their intercultural skills. For NU students, meeting and observing students and faculty from a partner university can help to assess educational offerings and lead to joint research projects or even mobility opportunities to study at a partner institution.

As a flagship university, NU strives to share its efforts and experiences with other universities in the country, in order to further internationalisation of higher education in Kazakhstan as a whole.

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