

## **How to Approach Institutional Partnerships Program from the Perspectives of Socio- Cultural Differences in Management**

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University of Massachusetts, Amherst  
School of Education  
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MASTER'S THESIS  
HOW TO APPROACH INSTITUTIONAL  
PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

From the perspectives of socio-cultural  
differences in management.

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## Introduction

The idea of developing an analysis of institutional partnership program for my Master's thesis came to me last fall, 2003 when CIE team started working on a grant proposal for a partnership program between the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Yakutsk State University (Sakha, Russia). The project was initiated by the CIE professor Gretchen B. Rossman and a group of international students from the former Soviet Union.

The project was developed for an open grant competition for Freedom Support educational Partnership Program with Eurasia. The FSEPP is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs.

The CIR team consisted of five international students from three new independent countries of the former Soviet Union. Most of them had had experience of working at higher educational institutions at their home countries before coming to study at U.S. University. The CIE team had originally started working on tentative projects with several institutions located in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Russia. The preference was given to Yakutsk State University as a new area to promote international partnership program. Another insight I received during my summer internship at Indiana University, Bloomington where I met the people working on Russian projects.

A very strong impulse was given by the professors and students at CIE who put forward an idea of launching a new experimental course in grant proposal writing. Writing a real grant proposal on a short deadline turned out to be a hard work. It was a great experience for me because I was working with my home university but being part of the U.S. university design team. Now I think if it had not been my home university I

would not have gotten so much experience. During our work I had to make a great deal of negotiating with Yakutsk design team via electronic mail and international telephone talks. I would act as a cross-cultural interpreter for my Yakutsk colleagues so I started thinking of those cultural differences that we encountered in the course of the entire process of grant proposal writing.

When one of my interviewees said in his talk: "I know there are some cultural things that could explain why we act differently from our Russian partner...", I thought: "This is what I want to do".

This research study considers an international institutional partnerships program as an interaction between two different cultures with the focus on grant management. “Good research is also grounded in theory. It should have a clear concept” (Peters, p.46). The concept for the current research study is built around an interdisciplinary approach that combines two different fields of social sciences- cross-cultural communication and business management.

The literature focus is mainly put on both American and Russian national cultural values in relationship to business management, A framework for the literature review as well as the research study on a whole has been provided by a “culture bound” theory offered by N. Hofstede (1983).

The research body is composed of two studies. American perspectives on partnerships programs with Russian higher educational institutions are discussed in chapter 3. It is based on the analysis of three in-depth interviews with the American faculty and graduate student who have had rich experience of working on Russian projects. The interviewees represent two different U.S. universities as well as different partnerships projects sponsored by different funding agencies.

In addition to the above mentioned interviews with the American participants I have referred to self-reflections on my own experience in grant proposal writing.

Chapter 4 presents a survey completed by fourteen Russian universities that had participated in the FSEPP. Thus study is part of my research study on program evaluation

(professor Jeffrey W. Eisman). I believe that such multi sided approach to a research study allows to make an in-depth investigation of the interested subject from different perspectives. The program evaluation was focused on the question:” What should be changed to improve the program?”. The focus of my Master’s thesis was a little different:

The survey was developed to find out what difficulties Russian participants had encountered with in the course of grant management, mainly, during a grant proposal writing process.

Sampling of the interviews is small, and so it can not be generalized to the academic population on a whole, but it raises some interesting questions and insights which may reserve further research.

In the concluding chapter I offer some recommendations for both American and Russian parties who are interested in institutional linkage programs. The developed recommendations are based on the findings of the current research study and will be useful for university administrators, international program office staff, offices of research and development, individual faculty as well as various funding agencies in the U.S. and Russia.

Cross-cultural communication here is understood as an interpersonal interaction between people with different cultural experiences. The emphasis is made on a main idea of interpersonal communication: exchange of information where a recipient of primary information is also a sender of information. In the context of international partnerships program between U.S. and Russian institutions the communication is performed between two different cultures through interpersonal interaction of design team members. I t should be also noted here that this type if cross-cultural communication is performed at

the level of organizational subcultures, that is, at the level of academic institutional culture.

On the other hand, this cross- cultural communication is performed in a specific field of grant management. Although a certain way of thinking lies in deep national cultural background different styles in business management and, in grant management in particular, are rooted in different social systems. Under the conditions of planned socialist economy there was no room for competition and entrepreneurship, there was no way to foster any imitativeness and assertiveness towards completion one's work. On the contrary, American partners consider grant seeking as a multi-billion dollar business with the focus on satisfying a customer's needs. In this case of grant seeking the customer is a funding agency that is going to sponsor those applicants who would meet their needs. Failure to understand grant management as a competitive business by a Russian partner will immediately affect an entire process of cross-cultural communication.

As part of my Master's thesis I have designed a workshop for Russian prospective participants of the FSEPP. The goal of the workshop is to raise cultural sensitivity of those who are involved in cross-cultural communication through grant management. The suggested two-day workshop consists of six stages:



Special literature related to cultural exchanger and business management was looked through to support the empirical data. Also literature on the subject under investigation gives a solid theoretical foundation that allows conceptualizing the research study. The first part of the literature review has its focus on culture theory.

Bhawuk, P.S. and Triandis H.C. argue the need of theoretical knowledge of differently cultures and their values for intercultural training and cross-cultural communication. Having made a brief review of the research in the field of study of learning, they look closely at the current thinking about the way people develop their expertise (Anderson, 1990). The authors suggest a model of developing cultural expertise on the basis of gained culture theory. The suggested model has three stages of expertise development that differ in theoretical knowledge in cultures and experience of intercultural interaction.

In the context of the current research study I would like to draw special attention to the second stage. The authors state that “Experts are novices who have acquired the knowledge of culture theory and that they can organize cognitions about cultural differences more meaningfully around the theory” (Bhawuk, P.S. and Triandis H.C., p.19).

This suggested model of cultural expertise development supports the current research study in terms of implementation of the study findings. Prospective participants in international partnerships program should acquire some knowledge about different cultures prior to developing international programs. They will be able to avoid misunderstanding in partnership work.

Hughes, G (1996) and Spodek, H (1996) share the opinion that intercultural education should become an integral part of school curricula at all levels. Among courses the two authors distinguish intercultural communication programs where “usually stressing the process of communication across cultures more than the content of communication” (Hughes, p.92) and “It has the most direct and comprehensive relevance to intercultural education” (Spodek, p. 103).

There are several definitions of cross-cultural communication given by various scholars and researchers working in the field. Here is one of these definitions that fully reveal its meaning:” Cross-cultural communication is a process of interpersonal or media interaction between people with differing socio- cultural experiences. (Dodd, p.4). The author singles out the following cultural variables that affect communication between and within cultures: (1) social perception, (2) attitudes, (3) social organization, (4) patterns of thought, (5) roles, (6) language, (7) various nonverbal dimensions. (Dodd, p. 6 ).

To understand cross-cultural communication better it is wise to consider national cultural patterns of thinking and behavior. Let me start with Russian culture first.

The number of studies on the Russian national character is very limited. . In the former Soviet Union national cultures were denied their unique identities for the sake of a new social phenomenon –Soviet people. For cross-cultural communication, if any at all, it was enough to know Russian language while other components were ignored.

Until 1990s few Western researchers were allowed to conduct any comparative empirical studies. Most of these scarce studies were pure observations not supported by

any other research techniques. A greater part of foreign observations on Russian cultural behavior were made by American politicians and ambassadors,

Thus, Yale Richmond is an author of several books about Russia issued at different time. The author mainly refers to his twenty-five year personal experience of working on various Russian programs as a political advisor at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow.

The author writes in the second edition of the book *From Nyet to Das* While some differences can be seen between city dwellers and total people, between workers m peasants, and intelligentsia, and the generations, the cultural characteristics described in the first edition remained valid” (Richmond, p. 2).

The writer noted that the two peoples had similar histories:” Russians feels common identity with Americans as citizens of multiethnic, continental great powers”( Richmond, p.4). .

The historical fact that both countries have been expansionists portraits them as nations of conquerors. I personally believe that this historic fact of being conquers has brought the two nations to the idea of a world leadership. The “mission of a world leadership” became more vivid for each of the two nations after World War Two. Division of the world into two different social systems with opposite ideology led to a long period of Cold War. Political confrontation and socio-economic competition between the two countries gave no chance for cross-cultural communication; instead, it brought to very stable and strong negative stereotypes about each other. I would call them political stereotypes because they were a pure product of imposed political propaganda and had very little to do with real national cultural background.

The book is intended to break down these negative stereotypes that American still have about Russian people. But unfortunately, the author has made some mistakes that may only confirm these stereotypes.

For instance, at the beginning of each chapter there is a small graphic picture of a big black bear. Black bear symbolizes Russian power and might but at the same time it is associated with wildness, clumsiness in political games. The way the author describes how Russians conduct negotiations fully confirm this image of non flexible; one way thinking partner.

The observations mostly come from old political scenario of the Cold War period. The author refers to a former Soviet foreign minister Molotov who was dubbed “Stonebottom” because of his ability to outsit the other side. Russians regard compromise as a sign of weakness, retreat from their previous positions. They are “big sitters” and are prepared to sit for hours and wait till the other side gives up. ( Richmond, p. 157).

Another remark of the writer that Russians teams have more senior people would be true about official delegations of old Soviet time but it is very irrelevant for today’s Russia.

Unfortunately, many books on American-Russian relationships describe situations from political setting and operate old political stereotypes (Richmond, Y. 1996, Mungazi D. A. 2001, Shalin, D.N., 1996). The relationship between nations had been developing in the context of the two opposed systems – socialist world versus capitalist world.

Russia is often opposed to the U.S.A. as East to West. This, Richmond says:” Russian negotiating strategy reflects difference in thought pattern between East and West. Western negotiators prefer pragmatic and detailed approach taking one issue in a time

and progressing systematically toward a final agreement. Russians are more general and conceptual; approach without specificity” (Richmond, Y., p. 152).

Another interesting book about today’s Russia is written by a group of Russian scholars who prepared several chapters on close examination of the Russian culture.

For my research study it is worth looking at the chapter “Labor culture” where the author Vladimir V. Magun gives a picture of today’s labor culture.

Up until the late 1980-s the Soviet ideology favored public over private interests and spiritual over material labor motives. The priority given to public motives perfectly fitted to the totalitarian mode of the Soviet society, which subordinated individual to the state. “The legalization of private sector and changes in public opinion has led to rapid growth of a new employment pattern.” (Magun, V. V., p. 288). There is a great change in people labor behavior since then: people have become very active in entrepreneurship, they are not so much afraid of losing their jobs, they have started thinking of their personal interests.

The most recent signs of labor behavior pattern prove that socio-economic factors can shape certain ways of people’s behavior and thinking, but they are not the only one to form one’s national culture.

Yuri V. Levada in his article considers communist monopoly on power: “Thus today’s reformers have to grapple not only with institutions built in the communist era but also with authoritarian practices that have existed in Russia for centuries” (Levada, Y.V., p. 300). For many centuries Russian people used to live under the monarchy of Russian Tsar who had unlimited power over the country. All major decisions were issued from the Tsar’s name. People’s unrest and riots against official authorities were severely suppressed

by the Russian state. People believed and feared authority at the same time. The basic assumption about hierarchical structure of the Russian society is still very strong, and lies in a Russian way of thinking.

The concept of a Russian national character is discussed in the “*Russia and the West*” (Stephan, W.G., Abalkina-Paap, M., 1996). The authors were able to put together some empirical findings of the Western observers on a Russian national character.

Table 1. American stereotypes of Russians (Stephen, Abalkina—Paap, p. 370)

Gallop	Backham &Cantril	Peabody	Stephen
1941	1953	1985	1993
Hardworking	Cruel	Serious	Disciplined
Brave	Hardworking	Hardworking	Hardworking
Radical	Domineering	Firm	Obedient
Orderly	Progressive	Intelligent	Serious
Progressive	Backward	Thrifty	Strong
		Persistent	Proud
		Cautious	Orderly
		Inflexible	Conservative
		Passive	Competitive
		Self-confident	Emotional

I believe hat most information is based on American’s perception of the Soviet Union as an evil nation. During World War II perception was more positive but later during

Cold War relationships between the two countries got worse again, and the U.S.S.R. was associated with a threat to the whole world. The two countries were competing for world leadership. The words “obedient, disciplined, orderly, conservative” reflect relationship between an individual and a state.

Another table shows how Russians perceived Americans (Stephen, Abalkina-Raap, p. 373). Russian stereo types of Americans

Melinkoa	Stefanenko	Stephen
1990	1990	1993
Aggressive	Hungry for success	Ambitious
Strong	Enterprising	Spontaneous
Power Hungry	Relaxed in behavior	Dignified
Brave	Professionally competent	Competent
Dangerous	Self-confident	Energetic
Energetic	Individualistic	Enterprising
Noisy	Pragmatic in relation	Competitive
	Materialistic	Patriotic
	Communicative	Independent
	Ethnocentric	Sociable
	Thrifty	
	Diligent	

Here Americans are characterized more from the perspective of their business qualities: professionally competent, competitive, enterprising,

Another set of characteristics “pragmatic in relations, materialistic” have a negative connotation in Russian culture. Many Russians believe that spirituality is a core of the Russian national character. Opposing themselves to Americans as materialistic oriented versus Russian spirituality reflects their attitude to business.

A deep analysis of American cultural patterns is given by Stewart S. The following is some peculiarities of American way of doing business.

Relationships with official authority: authority has been diffused and flows upward from the people representative. Pressure for change comes from below. Historical roots are in Western Europe The relationship individuals-government is protected by law. Pluralism and tolerance for the diverse viewpoints prevail. The economy is based in private sector and free market, the role of government is minor. When negotiating, Americans represent mostly only themselves, or their organizations, and they prefer to make on- spot decisions.. Americans are raised in the success ethics- work hard, get ahead, be successful in whatever you do” ( Stewart, p.103).

What is missing in the description of both American and Russian cultures is a diversity of these two societies. Although multiethnic composition of the two societies is always taken as an advantage, the emphasis in the above research works was made on only one dominant culture. For American society a dominant culture is represented by a white American-Saxon Protestants while other cultures, such as African-American, Latin American, and Asian American m are completely ignored.

The same situation is observed in the Russian society. Western empirical data mentioned by Stephan, W.G., Abalkina-Paap, M., (1996) did not distinguish between



ethnic Russians and other nations inhabiting the country. Within the Russian society there is a great diversity of ethnic groups who have their own national cultural values.

One of the most effective ways to approach a different culture is offered by Hofstede in his book "*Organizations and cultures*" (1997). Many writers in the field of cross-cultural communication, international education (Bhawuk, P.S. and Triandis H.C., 1996, Sonia Blandford and Marian Show, 2001, Spodek, H., 1996.) have referred to Hofstede in their works.

Hofstede's main thesis is as follows: "Historically, societies are organically developed forms of social organization, and the concept of a common culture applies strictly speaking, more to societies than to nations." (Hofstede, p.12). Here the author considers a certain nation with its cultural values in a certain socio-economic setting with a certain type of ownership.

From this perspective American and Russian societies represent a good sample for a cultural dimension analysis. Regarding that these two societies are opposed as Eastern culture to Western culture set in different socio-economic conditions, this comparative study should be of great interest to prospective partners of cross-cultural communication.

Hofstede (1987) suggests applying six dimensions for culture analysis: power distance index, uncertainty avoidance index, collectivism and individualism, low context-high context communication.

Russian culture and American culture, these two cultures have quite opposite characteristics and are really very opposed to each other.

PDI : American culture is characterized as society with a small power distance scoring 40 while Russian society has a quite large power distance in all spheres of life. The relationship “boss- subordinate” is very strictly observed.

American society being a masculine culture is characterized as assertive, task-oriented whereas Russian culture as feminine one is more caring, family- oriented.

Low index of uncertainty avoidance for the American society and very high index of uncertainty avoidance for the Russian culture. Great dependence of Russian people on official authority and external factors that may interfere with them in everyday life makes them feel very anxious about future.

Russian society is characterized by high collectivist culture. This influences decision making pattern where any decision is made by a group consensus. Individualistic American society has quite opposite values and cares more about satisfying personal interests.

In the case of low context/high context communication American and Russian cultures are opposed to each other again in terms of following instructions. While Americans always prefer detailed instructions Russians will never follow instructions even if they are available.

The last dimension virtue vs truth put the two cultures apart. Russians like to believe that they are more concerned about spiritual values than material ones. It has been one of the most favorite themes in Russian literature – seeking for a meaning of the life.

The cultural analysis of both societies shows that Americans and Russians are critically opposed to each other having quite different ranking for all six dimensions. This

sharp contradiction is conditioned by a number of factors both of cultural nature and socio-economic ones.

Having all these cultural peculiarities in mind, let me look through the literature on management to find out how ideas of business and management may fit into national cultures.

Phenomena of business administration and management were introduced into Russian society quite recently after recognition of private ownership and free market. Russians are challenged by new economic conditions and high competition. Five-year planned economic tasks are replaced by on-spot decision making management.

As Mogun V.V. (1996) showed in his research on Russian hired labor under today's conditions, people have started changing their way of thinking and adopting ideas of Western business management. Management has direct Western-centric assumption and values that have been transferred now to other national cultures.

Americans have solid educational knowledge in business management and administration. The entire American society, and not only managers, has started practicing total management thinking. There are several components that make up this total management thinking.

The book *Management ideas* (Kermally, 1991) gives solid foundation of popular management for a wide audience.

"Americans are raised in the success ethics- work hard, get ahead, be successful in whatever you do" (Kermally, p.33). Relatively recently a pure economic term TQM – Total Quality Management has emerged into all spheres of American society.

Total Quality Management is concerned with “continuous improvement of performance aimed at delighting customers” (Kermally, p. 24). High quality performance at a workplace, thriving for success and great achievements are the main drives ruling in the American society.

New management thinking is not just business for business. Now it includes meaningful external factors, such as sociological, political, technological factors- STEP (Kermally, pl3)

Within the sociological factors there also come differences in national cultures. Understanding other mentality and historical background of a particular society has become very important to managing at a cross-border level. Very often Western management techniques commonly used in one culture fail in other culture. It is even truer about cultures having opposite social-economic background.

“When communication is between people with different world views, special skills are required if messages received are to resemble the messages sent. The most important overbidding skill understands the context within which the communication takes place. This context to a larger extent is culturally determined” (Mungazi, M.R.,p.171). So, as we can see business management is determined by certain socio-economic conditions but it is also culture sensitive. Priorities set by Western management are rooted deeply in national cultural experience.

Management is understood also as building relationships with people at a workplace, customer- seller relationships. Integral part of management is skills in conducting business negotiations. It is very important for American negotiators to listen to their partners as well as he heard by them.

Grant seeking is considered to be a multi-billion-dollar business where a funding agency is a customer and a proposed project is a product that must be done with high quality to satisfy the customer.

A quick look at textbooks and guidebooks for prospective grant seekers gives an impression of entering a big business. "If you approach a proposal planning and writing with a positive attitude and are willing to persist, you will succeed" (Miner, L.E., p.4). This sounds like a magic formula for anyone who is going to start a new endeavor. It contains three key components of American management: positive attitude, persistence, and success. All grant writers use such cliché as "successful grant proposal", "winning proposal", "winning research funding", "successful proposal program management" (Peters, A. D., 2004, Henson K, T., 2004, Bauer D.G., 2000). This way a positive attitude toward grant seeking is formed to attract more potential applicants, thus, have a higher competition to receive a quality product, that is, a grant proposal.

Concluding the literature review I would like to say that there is a lot of literatures available in the fields of cross-cultural communication and business management. The interdisciplinary approach to this research study may lead to a new area of social science-cultural management. This new area of social study may combine ideas of management or applying to different cultures. The two fields are really interconnected so closely that they are in need of special research.

"Culture in the form of dominant values is necessary but not sufficient condition for economic growth. Two other conditions are the existence of a market and a political context that allows development" ( Hofstede, p.169).

### Chapter Three Russian partner from American perspectives

This chapter is written on the basis of three in-depth interviews with conducted the American professors and graduate students who have been involved in partnerships program. . The two professors represent two different U.S. universities- Indiana University, Bloomington and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. They have worked with different Russian universities located in different regions. It is also worth mentioning here that the Russian universities had different fields of specialization.. This grant proposal was developed last fall with the assistance of a graduate student. She has quite a big experience of grant proposal writing for American NGOs, such as American Councils. Besides this experience she also a 2,5 year experience of living in Moscow, Russia

An integral part of this study is my own experience of grant proposal writing for Freedom Support Educational Partnerships Program last fall.

There are several topics that are worth paying special attention to. The topics are as follows:

1. Shift of U.S. agencies' interest in Russia;
2. Grant management
3. Personal contacts'
- r. Selection of participants;
4. Receiving an official delegation;;
5. Communication;
6. Long-term partnerships;

### **Shift of U.S. agencies' emphasis in the region.**

For the first decade of independence many programs sponsored by U.S. agencies were located mainly in the European part of the Russian Federation. The two large cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg were given special attention in terms of having various international projects. A number of exchange programs have been established between U.S. universities and colleges and institutions of higher education in central Russia. Now the emphasis has shifted towards other regions. If you look at the international scale, it means that the countries in Central Asia and Caucasus have become the priority target for the U.S. agencies working in the field of international development.

Within Russia itself the emphasis of international development has moved from Moscow and St. Petersburg to regions and national republics. Thus, the RFGP for the Freedom Support Educational Partnerships Program clearly says the following:” for partnership with institutions located in Moscow and St. Petersburg should clearly indicate how these partnerships would have an impact on other regions. Proposals that designate a partner institution in the Russian Far East and Tomsk are especially encouraged” (RFGP, 2003). This statement of the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs shows that the U.S.A. is going to expand their strategic interests all across the country.

While the universities in Moscow and St. Petersburg receive more state support for their development, institutions in regions are financed by leftover” principle. As a result, 48 Universities in the RFE region experience significant shortages in resources – technological and human – available to other institutions of higher education. This factor dramatically affects these universities' educational and scientific activities and slows down their technical and intellectual development and growth” (*Grant proposal for*

*FSEPP, 2003*). That is why international support for regional universities is very critical. Grant opportunity is the only way to receive additional funding from international agencies.

At the beginning of grant proposal development the CIE team had an option to start a partnership program in four countries, The regional program officer strongly encouraged to start writing a grant proposal with Yakutsk State University in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) in Russia.

### **Grant management**

American considers grant management as a “multi-billion dollar business” (Kenson S.W., p. 4).

The focus of this business is on satisfying customer’s needs. In the context of grant award a customer is a funding agency who is going to sponsor someone who will solve their problems, not the applicant’s problems. Americans approach grant seeking from the perspectives of Western management.

Western management has several key elements, such as being successful, task oriented, achievement oriented. Skills in negotiating are very important part of management.

This is what often happens if partners cannot communicate with each other:” I know there are some cultural differences. Maybe, they don’t like my ideas, and therefore, they don’t want to insult me by rejecting my ideas. American partner just need to clear the situation:” If you don’t like my ideas, give me your own,, There is a wide range of things that we can do. They just do not respond, this is how we loose good opportunities to get funded”.



My interviewee gave me a piece of good advice, one of the key elements of effective management:” In order to be successful you have to be very dedicated to doing this. If you are not very dedicated, you just give it up right away. You will be so discouraged that a lack of consistency and intelligence response that you will go to do something else”

Russian partner University should be more careful with managing the resources. Sometimes they do not keep the time frame. The resources may be there on time to be paid for the certain amount of work. But it often happens that six months have gone by, by they have not spent any of their time doing this work. And they only concentrate on what they are required to do at the time hen they know that I am coming to check on their work.. Then they suddenly are in panic. And in one month before I came to visit them they try to do six months worth work. And they think that I will be full.”

Americans are very concerned with keeping a time schedule. Time is money for them. That is why they prefer on-spot-decision making, fast discussions and brief meetings.

### **Personal contacts**

Many Russian universities are desperate to have a foreign partner university. Twelve Russian universities out of fourteen said that it was their foreign partner who offered to make a joint grant proposal for a partnership program

Many U. S. faculty and researchers are very good at professional networking, so if they have a chance to work outside the U.S.A. they always try to continue business

contacts with their colleagues. This is how the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, have made two partnership projects with Russian technical institutions in St. Petersburg and its branch university in Pskov. UMass professor Rick Taupier received an individual grant to work as a visiting professor at St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. While being there he established good contacts with his Russian colleagues. Upon his return to the UMass the professor initiated a grant proposal for a FSEPP between UMass and St. Petersburg Polytechnic University in conjunction with its branch in Pskov.

All in all Rick Taupier has had four formal partnership projects with three different institutions in Russia. In his interview the professor said: "To a very large extent I don't like to try to work with any region, or any university in Russia unless I know two or three people over there,, and I know that I can rely on them".

Another way to start a joint program is having someone in the grant design team who is familiar with the region and has some good contacts with local people. This is how the University of Massachusetts started a grant proposal process for partnership with the State University of Kalmikia. A graduate student being part of the U.S. design team had very good personal contacts with the people from, Kalmikia. Her knowledge of the region, and Russian language gave a good start to the project.

Another way to find a possible Russian partner university is through a Russian professor or a student who conducts his/her research in a U.S. university. This was how the Center for International Education at UMass developed a grant proposal between the University of Massachusetts and Yakutsk State University in the fall of 2003. Taking an advantage of having university instructors from five new independent countries of the former Soviet Union the CIE offered them to start an institutional partnership program

with the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. After some preliminary talks the preference was given to my home university – Yakutsk State University, Sakha (Russia). All my knowledge about my home country and university were a primary source for the CIE team. I was able to give a general description of the problems facing my home university at the present time, give quick answers to some general and special questions. As I know many key people at YSU in person it did not take long to get in touch with right people and establish regular communication.

In addition to my responsibilities of keeping regular electronic communication, collecting information and translating it from Russian into English and back, I was acting as a mediator between two different cultures. Being aware of my own culture but acting from inside of the other culture. I made the communication smoother and less painful for the both sides. Along with English-Russian translation I was performing cross-cultural interpretation.

### **\Long-term partnership**

Once a Russian university has got a grant from the U.S. Department of State for FSEPP, or any other organization for a partnership program with a U.S. university, it would like to continue working on the same project or start a new program with a new U.S. partner university. Here the interests of partner universities and funding agencies do not coincide if not to say more.

Knowledge of the region is really important for receiving a grant. The real critical element of making an effective grant proposal you should know a lot of small details. The potential partners should demonstrate be able to in their grant proposal that they know a lot about each other, and are very familiar with the partner university's need and capacity.

But in many cases it may work to your disadvantage if you are applying to U.S. government agencies to fund working in the same area for a second or third time. This how one of my interviewees put it:” Because they (funding agencies) have this kind of myth: if you have built good relationship with a region, then it will just be able to continue without their ongoing support”.

The review of the previous U.S.-Russian partnership projects shows that very few institutions have long-term cooperation. Ohio State University in conjunction with Tomsk State University, Tomsk Polytechnic University, Tomsk Academy of Architecture and Building received two grants from the U.S. Departments of State in 1994 and 1997. In February 2003 the CIE was hosting a group of Russian rectors, Dr. Yuri Pokholkov, a rector of Tomsk Polytechnic University was upset by the fact that they were not able to continue their collaborative work with Ohio State University any more. They had to find a new partner university, and preferably in the field other than business and economics.

The RFGP for the FSEPP states very clearly that ‘...proposals must seek either to establish new institutional affiliations or to extend the scope of existing partnership and must not merely extend projects previously funded by U.S. Department of State or other U.S. government linkage program” (RFGP, 2003).

Having a U.S. partner university with rich experience in the field of international development, such as Indiana University, Bloomington, does not guarantee success with grant finding. The U.S. Department of State and other funding agencies prefer to see diversity among both American and Russian institutions of higher education. The far reaching idea of all partnership programs is to promote mutual understanding among nations, not among a limited number of universities.

## **Politics**

There is also often some politics behind the scene. There may be politics at different levels- from a department level to the Federal Ministry and Embassy. Part of the politics is a power of decision making. While in the U.S.A. universities have a great freedom in terms of self-governing, independence in curriculum design, Russian universities have none of it. Due to high centralization all institutions of higher education are under strict control of the Federal Ministry of Education. The Ministry is in charge of all funding resources, curriculum standards introduction of new majors and minors as well as opening graduate programs and schools. In regions the situation is even more complicated as the local universities have to deal with regional ministries of education that act on behalf of the Federal Ministry and have no real power in decision making.

American professors should not be confused by relationships between a head university and its branches in Russia. In Russia a head university may impose its policy on other smaller campuses of its branches. Here is the story told me in the interview: "Once I was going to work with a branch of the university, and that branch had already done a large project with us. But the parent university was not happy with it, and stated that a new proposal should be made between a parent university and a foreign partner".

There is a strict hierarchy of relationships in Russian society, and it is more evident in a workplace. Small politics at the level of interior relationships between a dean and professor, professor and student is very important for making business with Russian university. There are certain people in the hierarchy who you have to take into consideration and cannot jump over their heads.

American partners are also aware of political games at a higher level: “Moscow may decide that no money would go to other cities. If any of the people in Moscow have something to say about the money, they will try to dismay an agency from spending the money in a region”.

It might be equally true about the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. To be honest, not only Russian side may decide the money flow, but American officials in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow as well. They may decide what region is worth investing money at present for some reason, and you will never know why.

Another thing that might happen to a grant proposal during an evaluation process is mismatch between American and Russian criteria of evaluation. It might happen that a grant proposal is rated as one of the best grant proposals by the U.S. experts and it is recommended to funding. But when it goes to Russian experts, it might have quite a different rating with the Russian evaluators.

Why does it happen? The RFGP give clear explanation of the review process on the American side:” All eligible proposals will be evaluated by independent external evaluators. These reviewers will be professionals scholarly, or educational experts with appropriate regional or thematic knowledge will provide recommendations and assessment for consideration by the Bureau. The Bureau will consider for funding only those proposals which are recommended for funding by independent external reviewers” (*RFGP, 2003*).

## **Selection of participants**

A process of selecting participants for exchange programs may become a really big issue for a Russian partner university. Russian partner may use a different selection process of participants that American partner does not think it is good. I find the following comment given by my interviewee to be very relevant and accurate:"

Sometimes a Russian partner wants to select people who have done some good things in the past, but now they are old, so they are selected in the way of award for their previous work or their previous positions".

This remark is very true to life. Very often an opportunity of participating in an exchange program is considered as a free trip abroad, a kind of vacation. It is very common when people from a nearest surrounding of a rector will be assigned to be the participants.

This is particular thru when a participant is a teacher of English language. One of my interviewees who conducted a program in civism education in Russia noted that:" Russian teachers whose English is good enough to participate in international programs are mainly teachers of English language. But in many programs it is more effective to have faculty or graduate students with other major than just English language. They are more likely to implement new curriculum and introduce new majors".

Just looking at the academic background of the Ed. Muskie fellow students currently studying at CIE UMass you will see that five students out of nine had worked as English teachers.

To prevent it the Bureau's requirement stipulates a full description of the entire process of selecting participants in a grant proposal. Moreover, it should be done with

involvement of the U.S. partner university. This is exactly what the Bureau needs to know in the grant proposal.” The proposed narrative should describe the procedures and criteria for doing so. The U.S. partner should participate actively I selection of foreign participants whether they are identified I the proposal or selected during the course of project implementation. All participants should be selected because of demonstrable qualification to contribute to overall project goals” (*RFGP, 2003*).

Working on the grant proposal for UMass and YSU we also encountered with the problem of participants selection. The following is a piece of conversation where we talked about potential participants:

- How about participants? Have you already told people about a possible exchange program?
- Of course, not! Nobody knows about it. Just a very few people, two or three, who are collecting some information you ask.
- What do you mean?! Does anybody else besides you know what this information is for? No, we haven't told anybody. Why? Once we get the grant, we will sit down and decide who deserves the right to go to the U.S.A.
- Who will decide it?
- The rector, provost, and heads of the departments.
- It won't work. The American partner will need to approve the participant.
- How do Americans know what we need? We can do it ourselves.



The way the Yakutsk team was going to select prospective participants in a very common way to do business in Russia. People do not get used to open merit-based competitions.

Our implementation plan for the partnership project between UMass and YSU gives a detailed description of the procedure of selecting participants. This will include three stages: preliminary stage, development of selection criteria, and application process.

The preliminary stage: the coordinator at YPI will hold an open question-and-answer session for students and faculty members. It is important to give publicity to the project as early as possible to involve a diverse team of participants.

In spring 2004 a coordinating team at CIE, UMASS will work out a list of criteria for potential participants (faculty members and advanced graduate students at YPI).

The formal application procedure will start on September, 1<sup>st</sup> 2004. This is intended to be a merit-based democratic competition. The coordinator at YPI will hold a session explaining the application procedure and details. Brief interviews focusing on the participants' statement of purpose will be held to insure their English language proficiency. Finally, the submitted application forms will be faxed to the coordinating team at CIE for vetting (Grant proposal, 2003).

I believe this is a good strategy to make a wide publicity for any international project which is planned to run at a Russian university. It will make it possible to reach a greater diversity among participants as well as strengthen democratic principles in Russian society.

## **Official delegation**

Another peculiarity about working with a Russian partner university is receiving an official delegation. This official style of making business was inherited from the Soviet time.

All my three interviewees share the common opinion about how to start a partnership project. The first step to do is to bring to an American partner university a group of administrators from the Russian partner university. The administrator from both universities will have a chance to get together. They have already communicated by electronic mail, and it is time to meet in person.

Usually an official delegation is composed of administrators from the rector's office. Official delegation does not necessarily include people who are associated with the project management. It is not a rare case when there might be an official form from a Ministry of education, either federal or local.

This visit of the Russian administrators usually has a purpose to make personal contacts between the administrators and key people for the current grant project. It is especially important for those people who have been working closely on a particular project. They have to see if everybody has the same pages, no changes have been done.

It is a good idea to take the delegation on a tour around the campus to show them university buildings and facilities. Remembering a visit of the Russian rectors to the University of Massachusetts in February, 2003 I have learnt some things that would be good for institutional partnership programs. First of all, some Russian rectors had specific issues to discuss with the UMass faculty. For instance, they all were very interested in quality assessment, distance education..

The second thing I would like to mention here is that official delegations should be accompanied on the campus by Russian students. This way Russian students familiar with both American and Russian systems will be able to draw the delegation's attention to the most specific things. It is not a simple translation from English into Russian and back but cross-cultural comparative introduction.

Besides the cultural part, a visit of the university administration is politically important. One of my interviewees put it in this way: "To have officials on your side who would support you is a half of the success." That is why it is a right thing to have officials from a rector's office and the Ministry of education even though they are not directly related to the proposed project. Making business in Russia it is always wise to start building good relationship with those on the top of the hierarchy.

### **Communication**

Communication between two prospective partner universities is more intensive during the period of grant proposal writing. In the case of FSEPP it is usually about five months. The Bureau announces an open competition at the beginning of July. The deadline for the grant proposal submission is at the beginning of December..

A good strategy here is to make some research on a tentative partner university well in advance to match academic needs of both partners to the RFGP's requirements. It is always better to start a dialogue with a Russian partner as soon as possible.

The process of grant proposal writing as well as grant management afterwards is very often complicated with technical problems of communication.

One of the most popular means of communication of today is electronic mail. Unfortunately, internet is not accessible for many people in Russia yet. High costs of internet connection do not promote internet for individual use. Most people usually use internet at their workplace or internet cafes.

The same situation is true for institutions of higher educations. Nowadays nearly all of them have their websites available in internet. To have internet connection and computer laboratories for many institutions was possible through special grant programs sponsored by domestic and international agencies, in particular, the U.S. Department of State.

But still very few university faculties have their own email addresses. It is very common when an institution has just one common email address for the entire organization. Usually this email address is assigned to the rector's office or to the international program office. American partners get really surprised at the fact that they cannot communicate directly to the contact person while working on the grant proposal and even after receiving a grant award. It is true that very few people would rush to get registered with an email address during the partnership project. In most cases the communication will have to be conducted through the only email address assigned to the rector's office. It might take a week or two to figure out whom this email came from.

The following is a comment on this personal impression that my interviewee got from communication with his Russian partners: "They do not check their emails more than one every week. They think it is like a post office: box that you can go there and check what there is in there."

Here is a cultural difference. In Russia a great majority of people live in blocks of apartments, the post boxes are usually placed in the hallways, so we probably check our post boxes at least once a day. So if American partners send their correspondence by regular mail it might reach the addressee faster.

While working on the grant proposal last fall we had a better experience with electronic correspondence. Our email correspondence was very intensive during several months. We could send emails back and forth during a day time. All the information the CIE team asked for was collected and sent to the UMass within one or two days.

There are some other possible difficulties that the two partners might come across. First of all, it is time difference between different regions. For instance, Yakutsk is fourteen hours ahead of Amherst. It is impossible just to lift up a handset to make a phone call during the office hours. To have a business talk on the phone you will have to set up a special time that would be convenient for both sides. In many cases it will have an interpreter unless one of speakers has good commands of a foreign language.

Although many people complain about telephone communication with Russia, I personally have never had big problems calling to Yakutsk. But what I have found about the inconveniences with phone communication is shortage of telephone lines in Russian offices in general and in academic institutions in particular. Unlike at U.S. universities Russian faculty does not have a separate office for each individual faculty member. They usually get together in a board room while a phone is usually in a Dean's office. When an American partner is given a phone number to get in touch with a contact person at the Russian university, he/she assumes it to be a personal phone line; he/she can not understand why the contact person is never on the phone!

Another thing that makes American partners mad is that office phones do not have any answering machines to leave a message. It makes a lot of inconvenience and waste of time. Someone has to sit and keep dialing and dialing till you can finally hear.” Oh, the person you are looking for is not here. And I don’t know when he/she will be available. Of course, I can take messages for him/her but not sure if I will be able to deliver it to the right person”.

## Chapter Four Russian perspectives in grant proposal writing

The chapter presents an analysis of the survey completed by fourteen Russian institutions who have participated in FSEPP. The survey was prepared and sent by electronic mail to the thirty five Russian institutions.

Let me introduce a brief review of the Program activity in Russia.

The Freedom Support Educational Partnership Program was launched in Russia fifteen years ago. The first institutional partnership program was carried out in 1989 between the University of Minnesota, and Petrozavodsk State University in the field of social science. Since then eighty eight partnerships have been completed within the FSEP with Russian higher education institutions for the total amount of more than \$ 50 million. Seventy nine state higher education institutions out of total 358 operating in the country have participated in the FSEPP that is 41%.

The FSEPP is very popular and attractive for participants in both countries. Competition is very high. Average number of submitted grant proposal is 37 per year with average annual number of 6 awards. As the data for the last three years show there is a significant decrease in the number of submitted proposals and, consequently, the number of awards: forty nine submissions in 2000 versus twenty five submissions in 2003. The number of awards has also decreased from eleven in 2000 up to three awards in 2003.

This significant drop in grant awards can be explained by certain changes of the U.S. geopolitical policy. Since recently the U.S. government has shifted its emphasis from European Russia to other new counties of the former Soviet Union that are located in

Central Asia. This shift of emphasis has caused some funding cuts of the Program: the award amount in the fiscal year 2004 is \$250,000 instead of \$300,000 in previous years.

The diversity of Russian participants is achieved through wide geographical coverage. Although a greater number of the participating institutions are located in central part of Russia, many higher education institutions located in the Far East and Siberia are also successful in gaining funding. Among them are state universities and institutes from Ekaterinburg in the Urals, Novosibirsk , Tomsk and Irkutsk in Siberia, Vladivostok in the Far East, Magadan in the Arctic coast.

It should be noted here that few institutions from only three national republics out of 29 have been awarded within the Program.

Russian participants are represented mainly by state classical universities- about 72% . Among other participants are state polytechnic universities, teacher training institutes, institute of economics and business as well as institute of engineering and building.

Thirty eight partnership projects have been performed in the field of economics-related majors such as business administration, business management, accounting, and international economics. Twelve partnership projects have been completed in the field of public policy and administration, government study. Eight projects have been conducted in the fields of education and law. Another field of civic education has been developed through five partnerships projects. Such fields of social sciences as American studies, journalism, special education, environment have become of interest this for partnership program in past five years.

The first question of the survey was put in the following way:



1. Who initiated to apply for the FSEPP grant??  
a. your university   b. U.S. university   c. \_\_\_\_ (other).

All fourteen responders selected the second option stating that it was their U.S. partner who initiated the grant proposal process. The following comments were written down:” We had been looking for this opportunity for a long time. When we had an American professor who got an individual grant to deliver lectures in our university we offered him to consider a possibility to apply for an institutional grant. But the official offer came from the U.S. University after the visiting professor returned to his home university.”

Another comment to this question sounded very similar to the first one:” We started thinking of it after our professors had visited several U.S. universities.”

The responds from Russian universities show that most institutions are not very familiar with grant opportunities available today. Many universities had been thinking about having a partnership with an American university but they did not know how to start.

Indeed, grant competitions were introduced in Russia quite recently      In Russia all state universities are funded by the government, including research activity for both faculty and students. There are a very limited number of domestic grant opportunities, to say nothing about internal university grants.

It is quite a different situation in the U.S.A. where individual research and institutional development funding is very common in academic setting. Most American professors and students apply for funding necessary to conduct their research work.

American students can gain good skills in grant proposal development by just practicing within the home university. This is how American students get to learn how to seek for grant opportunities, become familiar with requirements and structure of the grant proposal.

Another factor that greatly affects participation in grant competitions is shortage of information on the grant opportunities available for individual research and institutional development. In this respect institutions located in large cities such as Moscow and St.Petersburg have a great advantage over regional institutions. Besides timely information faculty and students have an opportunity to attend workshops and training seminars organized by international organizations to disseminate information and experience..

Regional institutions find themselves in a more disadvantaged situation. . Due to the limited access to the internet they hardly ever use resources on funding opportunities.

Having a visiting professor from a U.S. university is a good strategy to initiate institutional contacts. In most cases Russian universities would expect an American partner to make a first step to formalize an initiative. This may also be explained by national cultural difference between the two nations. Russian culture is characterized by a very high level of formal relationship in a workplace. A U.S. university as a lead partner university bearing full financial accountability is expected to initiate a formal procedure.

The same expectations take place during a grant proposal writing process. Again here all the respondents gave a unified answer: the grant proposal was completed by an American partner university for more than 50%. The entire design of the grant proposal

assumes that a U.S. university takes full responsibility for correct and timely completion as well as submission of the grant proposal.

There are some interesting comments given by four respondents:” We have developed the following sections: statements of needs, objectives and goals, description of our university and participants.” Another institution’s remark was as follows:” The developed grant proposal was fully based on our information. We completed our part of the proposal: the institute description, participants’ resumes.”

As we can see from the survey, Russian partner universities realize that they can be actively involved in the grant proposal writing process. It is in their best interest to have a strong voice in stating the problems and needs that face the university at present. The right approach to the statement of problems and assessing needs may be beneficial for both partner universities.

A third question with a multiple choice of answers can give more information about participating universities and a process of the grant proposal writing on the whole. During the actual grant proposal writing process Russian universities have encountered a number of difficulties.

Eleven responders (78% of all universities participated in the survey) have certain problems communicating with their American partners in English language. It means that in most cases communication is possible through an interpreter. Neither part has enough knowledge of the corresponding foreign language to be able to communicate in person. Both interpretation and translation require a lot more time to deliver information.

All fourteen responders have difficulties understanding a package of solicitation documentation.. The solicitation package is available in English language only. Russian institutions have to make translation of the entire package to be able to discuss it with their foreign partners. The abbreviations commonly used in grant proposal practice, such as RFGP, PSI, POGI may also be misunderstood.

50% of the responders are not familiar with the principles and technical equipments for the grant proposal writing. Probably these skills are not very relevant in the context of FSEPP for a Russian university since it is a U.S. partner university who is to complete all paper work and then submit the package to the Bureau.

Twelve respondents feel that they do not have enough time to develop good relationships with their U.S. partner universities. The most intensive work on the grant proposal starts at the beginning of a new academic year in September. The prospective partners have about three months of hard work to complete the grand proposal. There are a number of factors that might affect time schedule. Among them are translation of necessary information from Russian into English and back; collective decision making receiving official approvals from local and federal authorities to change curricula, and others.

Eleven universities (78%) have an impression that neither of the parts has good understanding of each other's capacities and needs. It might happen due to the shortage of time for preliminary communication prior to the actual process of the grant proposal writing.

It should be noted here that two universities who do not share this opinion had a previous experience of hosting a U.S. visiting professor.

Five universities (about 35%) find mismatch between their needs to the partnership program objectives. They give the following explanation:” We needed funding for technical equipment; computers, internet.” Another comment was very similar to the first one:” Our biggest concern was introduction of innovative technology of education. We would rather have a grant to purchase internet classrooms”.

The Bureau clearly states in the Program overview that:” Projects focusing primarily on technology or technical infrastructure development are not eligible for consideration under this competition” (*POGI, 2003*). But there are also other competitions specially designed for promoting internet technology, technical equipment, distance education sponsored by the U.S. government agencies. Russian universities who would like to focus on internet technology should apply for these special programs.

66% of all universities participated in the survey (9 responders) have certain difficulties with means of communication, mainly with electronic mail, regular mail and telephone communication.

I would assume if a university does not have internet connection, then it should be really hard to maintain regular fast communication with a foreign partner university. Not many institutions have a separate file server to perform a system network for their faculty and students. People have to get registered with different external servers; in this case it is not so easy to disseminate information in time.

Among other difficulties the universities have indicated the following:” Finding a U.S. partner” and “Find a partner university to continue working on the project”, It is the Bureau’s policy pursuing project sustainability after the grant period completion. Russian universities are expected to be able to continue the project generating funds from other

resources. Very few partnerships have received additional grant funding for the same project. Both American and Russian universities will have to develop new ideas to approach a funding agency.

For nine Russian universities (64%) the most challenging parts of the grant proposal design were “Statement of needs” and “Writing resume”.

Stating needs requires deep knowledge of the region and a tentative partner university’s capacities. This may be done through close communication of the two universities prior to the actual grant proposal writing starts.

It should be noted here that Russian universities are inclined to put several big goals trying to solve all their needs in one grant proposal. The best strategy is to get focused on one basic problem and try to approach it from different perspectives. The U.S. partner university should assist in setting the priorities for the current proposed project.

Cultural differences in official styles may cause certain problems in such a simple thing at the first glance as writing resume for Russian participants. I myself faced it when we were working on the grant proposal between the UMass and YSU last fall.

I was almost shocked when I received the resume from potential YSU participants and key persons. The resumes had a lot of general information not necessarily relevant to the proposed project. For instance, there was a resume starting with the words:” I was born in the city of Yakutsk in ...”. The essential difference between American and Russian official styles of writing resume is the order of reported events. Russian resume gives a chronological order of events starting with study in an elementary school. The person’s current position will be placed at the end of the resume. American style of official

CV or resume requires a reverse order of events. Any job or position held currently or most recently should be put at the very beginning of a resume or CV.

Preventing this type of cultural misunderstanding the funding agency recommends a prospective U.S. partner university team to assist their peer team at a Russian university to prepare resumes:" The U.S. partner is encouraged to work with foreign project participants in developing and editing their resumes to meet U.S. standard and content" (*POGI, 2003*).

The Bureau also recommends the U.S. partner university to assist in a procedure of selecting Russian participants for exchange programs Maybe that is why less than a half respondents ( 43%) indicated that they had had difficulties with selecting participants.

Equal number of the responders –three universities (21%) per each position, had some trouble with completing sections "Budget" and "Evaluation". An American lead university bears full responsibility for grant fund management and financial reporting to the U.S. taxation Department. Russian Partner University can contribute in the form of cost-sharing in kind. Another way to benefit more from the grant funding is to give more accurate figures for domestic traveling within Russia, hotel accommodation. In doing so it is possible to have more money for the participants' stipend, allowance for purchasing books and materials.

The Bureau recommends having an independent external evaluator to perform both formative and summative evaluation of the participation project. In most cases it is an independent U.S. evaluator. But in our case we have planned to have an independent Russian evaluator. He is very familiar with both Russian and American evaluation methodology.

Question 5 asks if the participants have used any internet resources or methodological literature for developing their grant proposals. It turned out that all fourteen responders used a solicitation package offered by the Bureau only.

This question is interrelated with the next an question. None of my responders have office or a service that would be dealing with developing grant proposals. At best Russian institutions may have an international program office that would some contacts with various international organizations. In my home university in Yakutsk (Sakha, Russia) the IPO stuff are not familiar with grant proposal developing process. The best thing they can do is to disseminate information on open grant completions for university faculty and graduate students once in a while.

Shortage of special knowledge and high demand in additional grant funding necessary for sustainable institutional development and continuous faculty professional growth make Russian universities think of having special services to deal with grant business. All fourteen universities agree that there is a great need in having such services in institutions of higher education. Or, at least, as one respondents put it:” At least, we need one person who should know how to design a grant proposal”. I would like to make a suggestion here that an office of grants perform a number of other functions, such as monitoring newly announces grant completions, conducting training seminars and workshops for faculty and students, consulting on the grant proposal writing , including budget, resume writing, and many others.

Out of fourteen respondents only four universities (20%) have applied for Russian domestic grant funding. So participation in FSEOO was the first and the only experience (and successful!) of applying for grant funding. This successful experience of



participation in the international grant competition should encourage the universities to seek for more grant opportunities sponsored by either Russian domestic or international agencies.

A little more than a half of the respondents (57%) shared the opinion that applying for international grant funding is more challenging than applying for Russian domestic grants. On one hand American partner universities provide their major assistance with complicated grant proposal development. On the other hand, a quite limited number of grant opportunities in Russian domestic market creates extremely high competition between state universities and institutes.

The survey findings have shown a great interest of Russian higher education institutions in international grant competitions in general and in institutional partnerships program in general. Along with it, , the survey has revealed a number of problems those Russian universities have come across with in the course of grant proposal writing. There are certain areas of cross-cultural communication where American and Russian partners fail to find common points, such as negotiation, decision making, time concept, communication.,

This chapter contains main findings of the current research study and recommendations for both American and Russian prospective partners.

After having reviewed the two studies o American perspectives and Russian perspectives on international institutional linkage program I have revealed the following:

1. Freedom Support Educational Partnership Program wit Eurasia diversifies and extends international academic exchange between a variety of U.S. and Russian higher education institutions;
2. The Program advances mutual understanding between the two nations by supporting institutional partnership in different academic fields;
3. FSEOO promotes exchange of cultural values through cross-cultural communication;
4. Cultural differences that take pale in the course of grant management are conditioned by certain socio-economic environment;
5. There are certain areas in interaction that require special attention of both prospective parters;
6. Along with the areas of common interests eacj partner encounters with specific difficulties.

The Freedom Support Educational Partnership Program with Eurasia presents an effective way for advancing mutual understanding between the U.S. A. and Russia form the perspective of intensive exchange of cultural values. Cross-cultural communication that takes place in the course of grant management reflects differences of socio-cultural

nature. In this research study culture is understood as general phenomenon for human society at a certain stage of socio-economic development.

Certain way of thinking lies in deep national cultural background different styles in management are rooted in different social systems. American and Russian societies are opposed to each other not only in the East –West cultural context but as two different ideologies based on a certain type of economic relationships.

Russian society that used to have state ownership for several decades still reflects in a great degree the type of socio-economic relationships inherited from absolute state control over individual interests. Alienation from results of production determined individual's attitude toward this production and the state. State ownership discourages individuals from being competitive, initiative and task-oriented. Individual did not really need to be an individual when distribution of scarce resources was made beyond his/her control. In society with scarce resources it was much safer to be within a collective, group but an individual.

It is all way round in society with private property and free market. High competition in the labor market makes Americans be individualistic, assertive, achievement –oriented. These characteristics were well perished in the psychology of conquerors and pioneers that have shaped America way of thinking. Western management was developed on the basis of main American values and assumptions that might bring to miscommunication and misunderstanding between representatives of two different, sometimes very opposite cultures.

The current research study has revealed that America and Russian partners have encountered some difficulties during their interaction. Below is a list of the areas that are relevant to both partners:

1. Shift of U.,S. emphasis from higher education institutions located in European part of Russia to institutions in the Far East region. It should encourage both American and Russian potential partners in regions to be more active and initiative.

2. Communication between the two partner institutions may be complicated due to several factors:. First of all, it is a language barrier when either of the partners has sufficient knowledge of a foreign language, in this case communication is performed through a translator or interpreter that might result in missing some information during translation. Translation is time-consuming, and it may lead to other problems when working on a short deadline.

Limited number of telephone lines in a workplace along with lack of email accounts may also bring to communication problems.

3. Personal contacts are important for establishing good business relationships with a prospective partner institution.

4. Politics is a product of social system It nay include setting good relationships with top officials. Hierarchy and obedience to authority are important parts of Russian society

5. Long-term partnerships are not so much supported by the funding agency who expects the partners to be able to provide project sustainability after the grant period.

6. Selection of participants may become a big issue on the partnership agenda. Partners often have different expectations on participant's selection.

7. Grant management include all stages of partnership activity- building preliminary relationships with prospective partner institution, grant proposal writing process, running the project , maintaining project sustainability after te grant period. Different styles in management nay affect decision making, course of negotiations, communication, observing time schedule

Along with certain areas of common concern there are a number of specific issues that a Russian partner may come across in the course of grant seeking. The specific issues are as follows:

1. Freedom Support Educational Partnerships Program may be a very useful learning experience for Russian universities in general, and for individual faculty members and graduate students in particular. It is a big luck to be able to be working in conjunction with American faculty who have rich experience in this filed.

2. Regional collaboration with other higher education institutions are strongly encouraged by the Bureau. It will make a grant proposal more competitive.

3. Resume writing reflects another cultural peculiarity about Russian way of thinking. Resume should meet the American standards

4. Diversity issues are not addressed by Russian partners. They are mot always ready to discuss such issues as national diversity, gender issue, various minority groups are.

5. Statement of goals and objectives often contains several big goals that are not feasible to reach in one grant project. Russia partner universities try to solve all their problems at once In one partnership project.

On the above identified areas of common and specific concerns I would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Both American and Russian partners should increase their awareness of the socio-cultural differences existing between the two nations. The suggested workshop (see appendix) is developed to assist Russian university faculty and graduate students (1) to raise their knowledge on cross-cultural communication, and (2) overcome their fears of grant seeking. Introduction into cross-cultural communication is based on the Hofstede's theory of six dimensions to measure cultures (1980). The workshop design also provides training on Western basic management ideas. Participants of the workshop will get acquainted with a grant proposal design and try to develop a grant proposal draft for their school or departments.

Russian higher education institutions should have a special service- office of grant and contract administration that would be dealing with grant management. This office will be responsible for maintaining contacts with various funding agencies and informing the university faculty of open grant opportunities. The office staff should have experience in grant management as well as in the field of international cultural exchanges.

Besides it, the office staff will be able to conduct various workshops for university faculty and administrators, undergraduate and graduate students to train their skills in grant seeking.

3. The current research findings can be used also by funding agencies to introduce new partnership programs with consideration of the issues discussed here. It may be helpful for them to understand pattern behavior of their potential applicants, improve certain position on a solicitation package.

4.. The current research study had a focus on Freedom Support Educational Partnership Program. But the research findings can be effectively used on other international joint projects with the involvement of U.S. and Russian partners.

5. Russia partners should be more actively using modern means of communication, such as electronic mail, telephone to discuss any issues in the course of grant proposal development. They should be more actively more actively involved in the process of grant proposal writing, especially at the stage of discussing the institutional needs and activities plan.

6. As part of work that an office of grants and contracts may conduct is workshops on grant management. I have designed a workshop for Russian prospective participants of the FSEPP. The goal of the workshop is to raise cultural sensitivity of those who are involved in cross-cultural communication through grant management. The suggested two-day workshop consists of six stages:

- Understanding cultural identity based on cultural dimensions offered by Hofstede;
- Presenting ideas of Western management;
- Familiarization with FSEPP and its solicitation package: RFGP, POGI, PSI.
- Developing a grant proposal for your concrete school/ department;
- Evaluation of proposed projects by your colleagues;
- Summary of the workshop.

The suggested workshop design focuses on the FSEPP but it may also be useful for anybody who would like to start grant seeking for individual research funding as well.

## Conclusion

The Master's thesis presents an interdisciplinary research study of the U.S.-Russian institutional partnerships program from the perspectives of socio-cultural differences in grant management. I have offered an interdisciplinary approach that combines two fields of social science- cross-cultural communication and business management. It is not the only way to approach institutional linkage program. I believe the interdisciplinary approach selected for this research study allots looking at the subject from different perspectives and put a right emphasis on the topics.

This current research study may become a framework for my future research work. I am planning to develop further theoretical part for a chapter on research design with the focus on cross-cultural communication. To support my research I am going to conduct another survey to collect more data and evidence.

In doing so I have used gained knowledge from various classes I have taken during my study. I really appreciate knowledge and skills gained in "Educational research methods"- Professor Ronald Hamblton, "Qualitative research"- Professor Getchen B. Rossman, "Planning and evaluation for non-formal education"- Professor Gretchen B. Rossman, "Program evaluation"- Professor Jeffrey W. Eiseman, "Training for non-formal education"- Professor Sally Hafner-Habana. All these classes have made a great contribution to the development of my Master's thesis and will be very useful in the field of International education.



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## APPENDICES

Questionnaire.

Please fill in choosing a right answer (s).

**1. Who initiated to write a grant proposal?**

- a. your university   b. U.S. university   c. \_\_\_\_ (other \_\_

**2. The grant propos; was developed**

- a. by your university for more than 50%

- b. U.S. University for more than 50%

- c. Both partners made the same amount of work

**3. What difficulties have you accounted with during the grant proposal development?**

(Check more than one)

- a. language barrier in communication with the U.S. partner

- b. Complicated style of of the solicitation package

- c. Not familiar with a grant structure, technical requirements

- d. Shortage of time

- e. Both partners had little understanding of each other's needs and capacities

- f. The needs did not meet the grant objectives

- g. Communication with the partner (email, telephone, fax, regular mail)

- h. \_\_\_\_\_ (other)

**4. What part of the grant proposal was the most difficult for you?**

- a. Statement of problem

- b. Statement of goals and objectives

- c. Implementation (plan of activities)

- d. Resume writing
- e. Selection of participants
- f. Budget
- g. Evaluation
- h. \_\_\_\_\_(other)

**5. Developing the grant proposal you were using literature**

- a. internet resources I Russian
- b. internet resources in English
- c. books by Russian writers
- d. books by foreign writers

**6. Does your university have an office for grants and contracts?**

- a. yes b. no c. \_\_\_\_\_((other)

**7. Have your institution ever applied for a Russian grant?**

- a. yes b. no..

**8. Do you agree it is more challenging to apply for international grants than for Russian grants?**

- a. yes, agree b. no, disagree c. \_\_\_\_\_(other)

**9. Do you agree that every institution should have services for grant development?**

- a. yes, agree b. disagree c. \_\_\_\_\_(other)

**10. Your comments.**

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

Workshop design  
Grant proposal for  
Institutional partnership program

Introduction

The workshop developed in the class Training for non-formal education” (Professor Sally Habana-Hafner) is part of my Master’s thesis. The title of the Master’s thesis is “ How to approach institutional partnerships program from the perspective of socio-cultural differences in management”.

I got interested in this idea for this final project in fall 2003 when the CIE team developed a grant proposal for a partnership project between the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and Yakutsk State University (Sakha, Russia).

Grant seeking is quite a new phenomenon for Russian scholars and educators. Open grant competitions on a merit basis were first introduced about fifteen years ago by Western funding agencies. Russian scholars and researchers, undergraduate and graduate students have received an opportunity to enhance their professional growth, increase their personal potential and gain new knowledge and skills.

But still for many people grant seeking remains terra incognita. There are a number of reasons for it. I would like to mention here just few of them, the most important ones in my opinion. First of all, lack of timely information on grant

opportunities available for certain field. Secondly, all information on foreign grant opportunities is available only in English language,. Thirdly, people are not familiar with a grant design, and solicitation package language is rather complicated for understanding.

While working on the grant proposal for a partnership project UMass-YSU I realized that YSU faculty and graduate students are in a great need for workshops in grant proposal management. Grant proposal management here is merely grant proposal writing, but it is understood as an entire process of developing relations with a funding agency, effective communication with a prospective partner and running the project during a grant period and maintaining sustainability of the project after the grant period. Making a good grant proposal is a matter of building collaborative relationships with those who are going to be involved in both project development and implementation.

The overall idea of the suggested workshop is to assist Russian scholars and researchers, higher education institution administrators and individual

faculty, undergraduate and graduate students to overcome their fears of grant business and encourage them to start grant seeking.

The workshop is going to use various techniques , such as brief review of some theoretical issues ( FSEPP, Hofstede's culture theory, basic management, grant proposal structure, informative evaluation) as well as interactive activities with participants , such as brainstorming, working in groups, working with a peer group.

The suggested workshop is focus on the **Freedom Support Educational Partnership Program with Eurasia.**

The Freedom Support Educational Partnerships Program with Eurasia was launched about twenty years ago by the U.S. Department of State. The overall goal of the FSEPP is to support democratic principles in new independent countries through strengthening international institutional linkage and. The Program serves to support twelve new independent countries of the former Soviet Union located in the Caucasus, Central Asia, and eastern Europe..

Since then eighty eight partnerships projects have been completed by more than seventy Russian institutions of higher education for the total amount of more than \$50 million. The geography of the Russian participants is quite wide spread: from Moscow and St. Petersburg in central Russia to Vladivostok in the Far East and Magadan in the Arctic Ocean coast.

A greater part of the partnership projects between the U,S. and Russian universities is made in the field of economics related projects-business administration, accounting, international economics. Some new fields, such as American studies, journalism, environment, special education have been introduced in recent years.

The workshop is planned to be conducted during two days. Prior to the workshop all schools and departments at YSU will receive full information on proposed workshop: time and location, goals and objectives, expected outcomes.

**Location:** Yakutsk State University (Sakha, Russia)



**Participants:** YSU administrators, heads of  
departments, , faculty, graduate and undergraduate students.

International program office staff.

**Goal:** Develop knowledge and skills in  
International grant management.

**Objectives**

1. Raise cultural sensitivity of Russian participants;
2. Get familiar with basic ideas of Western management;
3. Learn about the funding agency- U.S. Department of States, Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs
4. Develop a grant proposal for a concrete school/ department.

Handouts for participants:

A clip chart, markers/ blackboard

DAY 1

STAGE 1- Cultural identity

Goal: Raising cultural sensitivity.

Objectives: 1. Get familiar with a “culture –bound” theory  
offered by G. Hofstede (1987)

2. Define one’s own cultural identity

3. Define American cultural identity

1.1. An instructor starts the workshop by introducing herself/himself and gives a brief introduction to the workshop:

-Goals and objectives of the workshop;

-Review of FSEPP;

1.2. After tis brief introduction an Instructor inviting everyone to introduce themselves and say a few words about their experience and expectations from the workshop.

1.3. An instructor asks the audience:” What fears do you have about grantseeking? What myths do you know about grant seeking?”

1.4. All answers are written down on the clip chart for further consideration.  
Possible myths: shortage of funding agencies/ shortage of money/ high competition/ etc.  
To address these myths an instructor should give some basic information on how funding agencies, how many programs are available in Russia (internal grants for YSU, local Ministry of education, federal Ministry of education, etc.).

1.5. An instructor summarizes fears, myths, and difficulties that might arise during grant seeking. He/she draws everyone’s attention to international grant opportunities, institutional partnerships programs in particular. The instructor uses the

survey completed by the Russian higher education institutions who have participated in the FSEPP (see appendix).

1.6. The instructor;’ The main problem of all miscommunication lies in our ignorance about our own culture and our prospective partner’s culture. What do you know about American culture?’”

All answers are written sown on the clip chart.

1.7. The instructor introduces Hofstede’s theory about six main dimensions of culture (see appendix).

Hofstede’s main thesis is as follows: ”Historically, societies are organically developed forms of social organization, and the concept of a common culture applies strictly speaking, more to societies than to nations.” (Hofstede, p.12). Here the author considers a certain nation with its cultural values in a certain socio-economic setting with a certain type of ownership.

From this perspective American and Russian societies represent a good sample for a cultural dimension analysis. Regarding that these two societies are opposed as Eastern culture to Western culture set in different socio-economic conditions, this comparative study should be o great interest to prospective partners of cross-cultural communication

- a. Power distance index
- b. collectivism vs individualism
- c. femininity vs masculinity
- d. Uncertainty avoidance index
- e. low/high context communication

f. virtue vs truth.

Power distance index : American culture is characterized as society with a small power distance scoring 40 while Russian society has a quite large power distance in all spheres of life. The relationship “boss- subordinate” is very strictly observed.

American society being a masculine culture is characterized as assertive, task-oriented whereas Russian culture as feminine one is more caring, family- oriented.

Low index of uncertainty avoidance for the American society and very high index of uncertainty avoidance for the Russian culture. Great dependence of Russian people on official authority and external factors that may interfere with them in everyday life makes them feel very anxious about future.

Russian society is characterized by high collectivist culture. This influences decision making pattern where any decision is made by a group consensus. Individualistic American society has quite opposite values and cares more about satisfying personal interests.

In the case of low context/high context communication American and Russian cultures are opposed to each other again in terms of following instructions. While Americans always prefer detailed instructions Russians will never follow instructions even if they are available.

The last dimension virtue vs truth put the two cultures apart. Russians like to believe that they are more concerned about spiritual values than material ones. It has been one of the most favorite themes in Russian literature – seeking for a meaning of the life.

1.8.. The participants read description of each dimension and try to place American and Russian cultures. At the end of the brief analysis the participants will see that these two cultures are opposed to each other.

1.9. The instructor offers to talk about academic organizational culture from the perspective of Hofstede's dimensions of culture.

All answers are written down on a clip-chart.

1.10.. Discussing an organizational academic culture at U.S. university (see appendix).

BREAK

## STAGE 2 IDEAS OF MANAGEMNT

2.1. An instructor #2 introduces himself/ herself ( an instructor of business management/ economics).

Although a certain way of thinking lies deep in national cultural background different styles in management are rooted in different social systems. Several generations of Soviet people were raised in society with state ownership and with no free market and no entrepreneurship while Western societies have had private ownership and free market with competition for several centuries. That is why there is a different attitude toward grant seeking. Americans consider it as "multi-billion dollar business" with the focus on satisfying the customer's needs. In this context a customer is a funding agency but

applicants for a grant funding. Funding agencies sponsor a grant seeker to solve their own needs and problems.

2.2. The instructor conducts a simulation activity on a management with the participants followed by debriefing. The simulation game should show how ideas of management work in different cultures. The debriefing put s a question:” What was wrong? Different expectations resulted in misunderstanding”.

2.3.The participants are asked to give any ideas on effective management. All answers are written on a clip chart and after it the instructor makes a summary. (see appendix).

2.4. At the end of this session the participants are given a home assignment: to look at any grant opportunities, grant proposal structure, requirements o a funding agency.

## DAY 2

### STAGE 3.

3.1. The instructor starts with an interactive activity with the participants asking a question:” What parts does a grant proposal have?” All answers are written on a clip chart. (also the participants have a brief description of a grant proposal parts in teir folders- see appendix).

#### 1. Narrative; Statement of goals and objectives

Statement of needs

University capacity

Plan of activities

Selection of participants

2. Resume writing
3. Evaluation
4. Budget/ cost-sharing
5. Sustainability
6. Executive summary.

3.2. The instructor uses the survey completed by the Russian higher education institutions who have participated in the FSEPP (see appendix).

For nine Russian universities (64%) the most challenging parts of the grant proposal design were “Statement of needs” and “Writing resume”.

Stating needs requires deep knowledge of the region and a tentative partner university’s capacities. This may be done through close communication of the two universities prior to the actual grant proposal writing starts.

It should be noted here that Russian universities are inclined to put several big goals trying to solve all their needs in one grant proposal. The best strategy is to get focused on one basic problem and try to approach it from different perspectives. The U.S. partner university should assist in setting the priorities for the current proposed project.

Cultural differences in official styles may cause certain problems in such a simple thing at the first glance as writing resume for Russian participants. I myself faced it when we were working on the grant proposal between the UMass and YSU last fall.

I was almost shocked when I received the resume from potential YSU participants and key persons. The resumes had a lot of general information not necessarily relevant to the proposed project. For instance, there was a resume starting with the words: "I was born in the city of Yakutsk in ...". The essential difference between American and Russian official styles of writing resume is the order of reported events. Russian resume gives a chronological order of events starting with study in an elementary school. The person's current position will be placed at the end of the resume. American style of official CV or resume requires a reverse order of events. Any job or position held currently or most recently should be put at the very beginning of a resume or CV.

Preventing this type of cultural misunderstanding the funding agency recommends a prospective U.S. partner university team to assist their peer team at a Russian university to prepare resumes." The U.S. partner is encouraged to work with foreign project participants in developing and editing their resumes to meet U.S. standard and content" (POGI, 2003).

The Bureau also recommends the U.S. partner university to assist in a procedure of selecting Russian participants for exchange programs. Maybe that is why less than a half respondents (43%) indicated that they had had difficulties with selecting participants.

Equal number of the responders –three universities (21%) per each position, had some trouble with completing sections "Budget" and "Evaluation". An American lead university bears full responsibility for grant fund management and financial reporting to the U.S. taxation Department. Russian Partner University can contribute in the form of cost-sharing in kind. Another way to benefit more from the grant funding is to give more accurate figures for domestic traveling within Russia, hotel accommodation. In doing so



it is possible to have more money for the participants' stipend, allowance for purchasing books and materials.

The Bureau recommends having an independent external evaluator to perform both formative and summative evaluation of the participation project. In most cases it is an independent U.S. evaluator. But in our case we have planned to have an independent Russian evaluator. He is very familiar with both Russian and American evaluation methodology.

### 3.3. Instructor makes a summary of the survey.

Areas of special attention:

- Diversity among U.S. higher education institutions
- Long-term partnerships
- Regional collaboration
- Communication
- Statement of needs
- Selection of participants
- Resume writing
- Diversity
- Developing relationships with the funding agency

#### STAGE 4

Instructor breaks the participants into several groups according to their schools and departments. The participants are asked to brainstorm and develop a draft of a grant proposal for their school or department. They are given 1 hour for this task.

#### STAGE 5      CRITICAL / EVALUATION

5.1. Instructor explains to the participants a new assignment: to exchange the grant proposal drafts with other groups and give a critical feedback, then write down an informative evaluation answering the question: "What else can be done to improve the grant proposal draft?" Time for this task-30min.

5.2. Brainstorm activity for giving critical feedback and preparing an informative evaluation.

5.3. The groups get together with their peer-group to discuss critical feedback and the informative evaluation. Time for this task- 30 min.

#### STAGE 6.                  CONCLUSION

Participants are encouraged to share their opinion on the workshop. Instructor makes a brief summary of the workshop. And thanks the participants for their work.