Report of the Commission on

Wider Engagement with Society

September 2012

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1. Introduction

It is estimated that the world population will reach 10 billion in the next 50 years with 90 percent living in poor countries. As a result of this population explosion, the importance of the sustainability of the environmental conditions, food resources, human health and living conditions will increase. The relative decrease in resources as opposed to the increase in population poses a growing threat for a healthy development of humanity. On the other hand, accumulation of knowledge needed for the solution of these problems continuously increase as well. How this knowledge will play a role in the solution of these problems will be determined by those who generate this knowledge. In this context, universities will play a critical role for the solution of the problems that the world faces at present. It is imperative for institutions of higher education to continuously review their stance and actions, if they aspire to provide knowledge-based solutions to problems generated by rapid population growth.

Generation and effective dissemination of knowledge for the solution of problems faced by the humanity is one of the three main and universally accepted missions of universities. These can be defined as education, research and communities engagement. While education and research activities of universities are commonly recognized, their wider engagement with society are usually overlooked. The Kellog Commission [1], which has been formed with the purpose of discussing these issues in the United States of America, met for the first time in 1996 and published its report following its final meeting in 2000, concluded that wider engagement with society will be a critically important mission of the American universities in the future. The commission further corroborated that a faculty and student body working together with an integrated approach to education, research and wider engagement with society will provide optimum solutions to these problems.

According to the Kellog Commission, wider engagement with society implies that universities and various elements of the society work together with common aims and goals to search for solutions to the problems of the society. Integration of research activities and wider engagement with society will enrich the education of students. Universities that emphasize the importance of wider engagement with society will generate new knowledge through the research activities of their faculty and students, and use it with innovative approaches to benefit the society.

In addition to its educational and research activities, Bilkent University aims to educate a new breed of well-groomed graduates who know how to reach to information and think critically to serve the society. A focus on wider engagement with society as a component of the education provided by the university will increase the awareness and capability of graduates to effectively deal with the problems of the society.

In this report, Bilkent University's current state of wider engagement with society is discussed. In addition, the opinions of important stakeholders are presented. The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by the university have been reiterated through a SWOT analysis.

In light of the discussions within the committee and opinions gathered from stakeholders, the fundamental aims of the University in establishing wider engagement with society have been determined. The activities related with the implementation of these goals are defined.

2. Potential of the University in Wider Engagement with Society

a. Current state and issues

The commission first discussed the current state of the university in wider engagement with society. Despite the presence of a significant number of strong points (as stated in the SWOT analysis), the following areas have been identified as amenable to advancement.

Extramural relations:

- Technology transfer is not at the expected level.
- University – Media relations can be fortified.
- University – NGO relations could be improved.
- Communication with the Alumni could be increased.
- Relations with the Cyberpark are not at the expected level.
- International relations could be diversified.
- The society could be informed about the contributions of the university to the public at large.

Intramural relations:

- Communication within Bilkent is not at the desired level.
- Social and common living environment is limited.

- A convention/cultural center does not exist.
- Continuing education opportunities are not provided.

b. Stakeholders and methods of information gathering

The committee prepared questions on the following topics to ascertain how the university is perceived by stakeholders and extramural institutions [2].

- Technology transfer, generation of economic value through research
- Quality of graduates and their contributions to the society
- Contribution to the regional and national economy
- Providing solutions to social issues
- Cultural and intellectual contributions
- Continuing education

These questions were sent to faculty members, alumni and selected extramural institutional executives collectively constituting the stakeholders.

c. Observations and propositions by the stakeholders

i. Opinions of faculty members

- Faculty members do not have adequate information on the contribution of the university to the society at large, and its policies on technology transfer. The university may consider increasing the amount of support and information to faculty on "sponsored research" and technology transfer.
- There is a general consensus that the university contributes to the national economy through its well-educated graduates. Faculty think that other contributions of the university is at a modest level. Faculty memebers stated that the university neither takes full advantage of its faculty potential nor does it spend adequate efforts to generate solutions to the problems of the society.
- The university is effectively informing its own members but fails to adequately utilize the social media channels to reach wider circles of the society about its cultural activities.
- The final question of the committee was on the topic of "continuing education". Faculty members expressed their view that this topic is important in terms of relations with and contributions to the society.

ii. Opinions of alumni

- The alumni hold the opinion that Bilkent University is passive or does not fully exploit its potential in cooperating with companies in different sectors; in addition, the present cooperation is not adequately promoted. They strongly believe that this cooperation is important and that Bilkent should actively pursue a close relation with the business world. In the case of technology transfer the needs of the companies and applicability of the technology are the determining factors that govern a successful outcome of this cooperation. However, they state that focusing purely on academics does not lead to successful outcomes.

- The alumni believe that they are highly qualified graduates. However, they state that they experience difficulties in adapting to work environment despite their strong academic background. They emphasize the importance of acquiring some general skills that would help them in business life.

- Bilkent could improve its support for its graduates through career counseling activities.

- Though Bilkent University's academicians believe that they are qualified, they think that their contributions are not known and broadcasted adequately.

- Bilkent University's alumni usually don't know about Bilkent's economic contribution to its environment. Additionally, the upbringing of qualified graduates, development of technological innovation and applications, companies built by its alumni and the Bilkent area itself shows that it makes great contributions. However, they believe that their current contributions aren't broadcasted sufficiently, and that Bilkent has a high potential to apply much more than it currently does.

- Bilkent's alumni also aren't informed about Bilkent's social contributions. Though they are partially aware of the Social Awareness Projects, they want Bilkent to play a more important role in increasing the society's awareness of environmental and current events with the aid of non-governmental institutions.

- Though some of the alumni are not aware of the cultural events organized in Bilkent, some state that they are informed sufficiently through email. Events are announced through email, BSO announcements and the Alumni Center. However, the alumni prefer to be informed through social media instead of email.

- Our graduates want to make use of the "life-long learning" programs and have some advice on doing so; they advise that such programs should be prepared and held in Istanbul in collaboration with the alumni.

iii. **Opinions of external executives**

- While firms that are currently collaborating with the University state that they are content and want to continue collaborating, they also want to extend to more than "undergraduate student" projects. Firms that who have not yet started collaborating also say that they look positively at this idea.

- Firms state that they need information and briefing on the Technology Transfer Office, as they do not have enough information in this area.

- Firms agree that the alumni are qualified and accoutered. They also add that the excess of self-confidence in the alumni occasionally has negative effects. Firms are informed that some of the academic staff contribute to the industry.

- While half of the Private Sector Representatives are not informed about the university's power to raise students, the informed half are aware of:
  a. The positive effect of the international staff of the university
  b. The indirect benefits of producing accoutered graduates
  c. Holding's effect on Ankara and its environment's economic development
  d. The supportive effect of Cyberpark on entrepreneurship
  e. The university's consultancies for SME's and big institutions.

- Firms are aware of the universities inclination towards social awareness, but believe that such projects are usually undertaken individually or by small groups, and that they are not broadcasted very well.

- Firms state that the university does not have an organized informing system for the cultural events, and that such services can be very useful. Means such as social media and regular emails can be benefited from in this area.

- Firms that state that life-long learning platforms are important and necessary, especially especially advice social media, employer branding, technology transfer, risk management, entrepreneurship and innovation, project management and presentation techniques as sample subjects. Also, they believe that "certificate/proficiency programs" can provide the society with the opportunity to make use of the university's technical information, and that the experts in these sectors can be the educators of these programs.

d. SWOT Analysis

The SWOT analysis using the data collected by the Wider Engagement Commission shows Bilkent University's opportunities, threats, strengths and weaknesses from wider engagement view.

Strengths:
- Strong research
- Academic staff
- The national and international recognition of the university
- Library facilities
- Campus university
- Qualified alumni
- Scholarships
- Education in English
- Qualified high schools (BLIS, OBL, Erzurum)
- Social awareness
- Urbanization
- Multicultural environment
- Bilkent Symphony Orchestra
- Erzurum school
- Region countries education program
- Well established university

Opportunities:
- The demand for continuous education / management education
- The institutions that want technology transfer
- Cyberpark
- The entrepreneur student group
- The development of the creativity culture
- The increase of the funds allocated for research & development in Turkey.

Weaknesses:
- The support from the alumni is not sufficient.
- Press and community relations.
- Lack of Culture congress center (hall).
- Communication within Bilkent

- Social life

Threats:
- The inability to attract successful students because of the increase in the number of foundation universities
- Being known as a introvert university
- The inability to keep academicians
- Istanbul's increasing appeal
- Change in performance standards

3. Objectives and Strategies

Analyzing the views of the stakeholders, wider engagement with society committee designated its goals to increase the community relations to be as follows:

OBJECTIVE 1: To increase the University's integration with the society

The information, experience based information and research, and the education environment that the university provides will help it integrate with the society. With this goal, by building a Technology Transfer Office, a bridge can be established between the university and industry, and the business community. Contributions can be provided to the society and economy by protecting the ideas and the intellectual property rights of the academic research, and providing the necessary mechanisms required to form an end-product. An environment can be prepared to raise more and support the current entrepreneur academicians and alumni. In the current competitive environment, for the industry and business world to carry out qualified research, matching, channeling and guidance services can be provided. With university-industry cooperation projects, the students can gain experiences and therefore have a more accoutered education with developed visions. University-industry cooperation studies can improve the industry and business world's view of the university.

Strategy 1: The transfer of information to the community

Activities:
- Analyzing of the activities of foreign universities successful in transferring their research results to the community.
- Providing an appropriate matching/channeling platform required for the research and development of industries and private sectors.

- Establishing a Technology Transfer Office based on the appropriate goals and priorities to be determined.

Performance Indicators:
- Benchmarking study
- Preparation of a catalogue containing the field of interests of the academic staff
- The establishment of a Technology Transfer Office

Strategy 2: Augment the university-industry collaborations

Activities:

- Increasing the number of projects done with the industry
- Increasing the quality of projects done with the industry
- Extend the institution portfolio of the collaborations
- Increase the proportion of the projects supported by public institutions
- Broadcast the department and academic staff that collaborate with the industry, and promote their activities
- Decrease the bureaucracy in collaboration with the industry

Performance Indicators:
- The number of collaboration projects
- The number of graduate level projects
- The number of institutions collaborated with
- The number of departments/academic staff that are collaborating
- The number of EU/Teydep/Industry Papers Program, etc. projects
- The percentage among the other universities
- The number of announcements/broadcasts made on the subject
- The number of applications/response time and response ratio.

OBJECTIVE 2: Strengthen the relationship with the alumni.

Strengthening the relationship with the alumni plays an important role in advertising the activities of the university. This will increase the project and service activities, and strengthen the alumni support. The alumni provide a foundation by presenting the university students with work and internship opportunities. Alumni experienced in the business world can provide an opportunity to the university's graduate and

undergraduate programs by sharing information about subject-related questions. Bilkent alumni can easily supply information about their successes in various fields.

Strategy 1: To promote the relationships with the alumni, establish, maintain and develop an information foundation

Activities:

- Renew (or, if needed, reconstitute) the "Alumni Database" such that numerous questioning is possible, and make it flexible.
- Periodically create a detailed "Alumni Profile"; the profile should be detailed enough so that it shows what support this alumni can provide to Bilkent.
- Determine the potential fields to collaborate with the alumni and periodically revise and renew these fields.
- Provide the necessary foundation (database, registration and access system, etc.) so that they can be easily accessed and systematically saved.

Performance Indicators:
- The number of alumni the University can reach
- The establishment of the alumni database
- The number of collaborations with the alumni

Strategy 2: Increase the interaction between the alumni and Bilkent.

Activities:

- Enhance the collaborations and service programs and start applying them
- Establish common projects for the student clubs and alumni and provide a supportive foundation to do so
- Provide the necessary environment to allow alumni to present work/internship opportunities to students
- Invite the alumni as a speaker in various subjects

Performance Indicators:
- The number of alumni collaborating with the university
- The number of common projects with the alumni

Strategy 3: Create a social environment to integrate Bilkent members, students and alumni

Activities:

- Arrange a "success celebration" twice a year to bring all the members together
- Constitute a social facility

Performance Indicators:
- The number of participants in the activities
- Planning of the social facility

OBJECTIVE 3: Increase the university's contribution to the environment and national economy

The university's contribution to the national economy is provided through education and research-development fields. By addressing the importance of research-development fields, research-development activities can be increased, and the relationship with Cyberpark, which is located nearby, can be enhanced.

Strategy 1: Promote academic staff in national fields to start projects with foreign support, and increase the consultancy services. Enable innovative and scientific projects by revising the University rules.

Activities:

- Broadcast the rules of consultancy and external support projects to the academic staff
- Revise the consultancy and external support rules

Strategy 2: Increase the promotion of the university's scientific activities and academician potential

Activities:
- Improve the online education opportunities
- Popularize the videos of lectures and conferences organized by the university
- Attempt to join the iTunes University podcasts
- By collaborating with the media, prepare documentaries
- Organize summer schools in high school levels

Strategy 3: Encourage Bilkent University's academic staff and students to establish start-up firms and actively work with Cyberpark

Activities:

- Review the rules applied for the academic staff who established consultancy and start-up companies and broadcast them so the students can be active in them.

Performance Indicators:
- Publications with high impact factors
- High citation ratios
- The size and work load (employees and TL) of the companies established
- The number of consultancies and their financial superiority
- The number of projects, employees and their financial superiorities
- The number of online courses and participants
- The number of videos, podcasts, documentaries and participants
- The number of students who participate in the summer school

OBJECTIVE 4: Finding solutions to social problems

Universities are responsible in raising information societies. Universities have the mission to not only educate the current information, but also raise the brain power required to shape the future society. For this reason, universities teach students how to access and interpret information, and use it to solve a problem.

Universities provide students throughout their education and after they graduation with the opportunity to improve their social service abilities. They help students increase their social awareness and become able to create a difference.

Attending social events will help increase their awareness of their positive effects and help them become confident individuals who know how to organize themselves to contribute to their surroundings.

The students and academic staff will become useful people who can increase the social awareness. Hence, the students will feel like they belong in a university and society.

Through the projects, the students will gain real life experiences and become people with a variety of socio-economic characteristics who can willingly form relationships with people from different descents.

The projects carried out with non-governmental organizations will increase the university's popularity and prestige; this will enable the university to guide the society to solve problems and, hence, the society will embrace the university.

The university will lead the democratic society in a productive and efficient way. This will help the university gain social awareness.

Strategy 1: Support activities that are oriented towards the society's problems

Activities:

- Develop research and activities that will help solve the society's problems
- Open a campus social facility/congress-culture center
- Determine non-governmental organizations that can help solve problems
- Lead national and international projects as a university

Strategy 2: Increase the number of social awareness projects

Activities:

- Have the student organizations support the social awareness activities and help them be applied outside of campus
- Prepare promotion documents
- Have a comprehensive promotion on the web page
- Broadcast the project through social media and mass media
- Determine the education demands and evaluate them
- Evaluate the social responsibility projects, and complete its defects and reconstitute it accordingly.

OBJECTIVE 5: Increase the cultural activities and broadcast them well

Cultural activities will directly provide a relationship between the society and the university. Through culture and art activities, the university will be in the society's social life, and therefore affect its development. The activities will help the university promote its corporate identity. The participation of university members in cultural events will help increase the sense of belonging. The protection, exhibition and enrichment of cultural heritage will affect the level of the society and therefore contribute to the university's dynamics. Cultural events will help sustain long-term or project based collaborations with

non-governmental and other culture and art associations, and will keep the university's relationship with them alive.

Strategy 1: Diversify the cultural activities

Activities:

- Prepare a facility that can be used for activities such as a congress, exhibition, representation, concert or show on campus.
- Support the facility with venues that host social activities.
- Establish a commission that can coordinate cultural activities.
- Establish a unit that can carry out cultural activities. Have students participate in the presentation and management of these activities.
- Support the cultural activities.
- Support the university's events by presenting them in person or through communication technologies.

 Performance Indicators:

- The number of cultural events
- The number of participants
- The number of participating students

Strategy 2: The effective presentation of cultural events

Activities:

- The use of social and mass media for the presentation of the events

Performance Indicators

- The number of target groups reached

OBJECTIVE 6: Satisfy the society's life-long learning demand

The university will raise knowledge era people who have developed thinking, understanding and problem solving abilities, and who can produce science and technology, and who have high skill levels. It will raise people who can think creatively, solve problems, reason, knows how to learn, question, and has the ability to take individual responsibilities. It will help students gain the ability to reach all types of information and use this information ethically and legally in an adequate way. Raising

students who are information literates will create awareness in ethical, legal and socio-economic problems related to information and information technology. By improving their life-long learning abilities, they will be presented with new opportunities and the chance to receive a higher education. It will provide the raising of people who can access and fabricate information needed to solve a problem within the university or society. By creating a group who are knowledgeable and skilled, work will be carried out efficiently and effectively. By increasing the quality of the business, the university will be able to compete in an international level and therefore will increase its prestige. The international collaboration and activeness in terms of life-long learning will be increased. Contributions will be made to form a society filled with information literates. This way, the competition and business levels will improve in the society, and it will be possible to adapt to a knowledge society. Forming an alliance between the academic staff, students, librarians and society will help raise people who are accustomed to continuously learn, and renew their knowledge and abilities. Subjects such as network literacy, technology literacy, computer literacy will be led to inform the society. The efficient use of information and information technology will be provided, and the ethical and legal use of information in the society will be led. Contributions will be made towards a learning society.

Strategy 1: By establishing the concept of information literacy, lead to form a society that has information literates

Strategy 2: Create life-long learning programs

Activities (For Strategies 1 and 2):

- Create continuous education centers.
- Establish the necessary technological foundation.
- Determine the subjects and levels of the education to be given at the programs.
- Create a curriculum for the active participation of university students, academicians and society.
- Establish programs that contain the process of determine the information necessities, finding this information, accessing this information, and evaluating it
- Create a program for computer literacy.
- Create a program that will improve critical thinking skills.
- Establish programs for collaboration with national and international institutions.

- Prepare long-distance learning programs that use e-learning technologies.
- Create certificate programs about social media, employer branding, technology transfer, risk management, entrepreneurship and innovation, project management and presentation techniques.
- Hold some of the certificate programs in Istanbul.
- Meet the academicians with the experts of the technical information sector.
- Prepare introductory documents.
- Have a detailed information on the webpage.
- Broadcast it through social media.
- Broadcast the program with mass and communication tools.
- By constantly evaluating the education given, overcome the deficiencies and develop it.

Performance Indicators:

- The number of education programs
- The number of participants in the education programs
- The number of participants who receive certificates in the education programs

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