



M. NARIKBAYEV

KAZGUU
UNIVERSITY

M. Narikbayev KAZGUU
University
Strategic Plan 2021-2023



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INTRODUCTION

M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University was founded on 14 March 1994 by the decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev "On the establishment of Kazakh State Law Institute of the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan" #1591. It is stated in the decree: "To establish Kazakh State Law Institute with the aim of implementing legal reforms and meeting staffing requirements for lawyers in the Republic and development of legal education and its quality improvement. Kazakh State Law Institute should specialize in preparation of lawyers for public authorities and management of legal, law-enforcement and economic entities".

Historically, as a result of a number of organizational and legal reforms, mergers, and transformations our university was known as KazGUI (Kazakh State Law Institute), KazGUA (Kazakh State Law Academy), KazGUU (Kazakh Humanitarian-Law University).

Now, the full official name of the university is **M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University** (hereinafter - KAZGUU). The decision was made that the word "KAZGUU" (in capital letters) as an abbreviation is no longer deciphered and is an independent common name (brand), which ensures its recognition and continuity. It also symbolizes that our university has ceased to be a "forge" only for lawyers and has successfully trained specialists in the humanitarian and social fields.

Thus, apart from KAZGUU Law School, Higher School of Economics (2004), Business School MBA/DBA (2009) and KAZGUU School of Liberal Arts (2014) were established which have now become leading centers in the quality of educational programs. In the rating of educational programs 2020 conducted by the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken", M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University took the first place among all 128 Kazakhstani universities. Business School MBA/DBA programs are currently the only ones in Central Asia that have been awarded the highest recognition of the international accreditation agency FIBAA - the FIBAA Premium Seal.

Places in the rating of educational programs of the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken", conducted by order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, over the past three years reflect a steady trend towards strengthening the position of KAZGUU (See Table 1). In 2020, out of 9 programs that participated in the rating, 6 programs ranked first, two programs ranked third and one program took the fifth place.

№	 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM	HIGHER SCHOOL	POSITION IN ATAMEKEN RATING 2018, PLACE	POSITION IN ATAMEKEN RATING 2019, PLACE	POSITION IN ATAMEKEN RATING 2020, PLACE
1	JURISPRUDENCE	KLS	4	3	1
2	INTERNATIONAL LAW	KLS	1	1	1
3	LAW AND LAW ENFORCEMENT	KLS	-		
4	FINANCE	HSE	8	5	1
5	ACCOUNTING	HSE	10	2	1
6	ECONOMICS	HSE	5	2	1
7	MANAGEMENT	HSE	7	16	5
8	PSYCHOLOGY	HSE	1	6	3
9	TOURISM	HSE	1	14	3
10	TRANSLATION STUDIES	HSE	24	3	1

Table 1. Dynamics of KAZGUU EP in NCE “Atameken” rating 2018-2020.

The reason for this positive trend is that the rating methodology is based on the objectified criteria that universities themselves cannot influence, or their influence is minimized - this is the percentage of employment, which is established only through a series of official contributions to the pension fund, an indicator of the duration of job search after graduation, indicator of an average salary of a graduate, etc.

This rating does not reflect the quality of research and scientific potential of universities, since it is not aimed at institutional assessment, but is focused on the quality of educational programs. Nevertheless, at the moment, this methodology and the subject of the rating assessment are the most objective in Kazakhstan in the field of higher education. Alternative ratings of individual accreditation bodies are not transparent enough and are not free from conflicts of interest, since these bodies (agencies) continue to provide paid services to universities.

This confirms the effectiveness of the chosen strategy for the development of educational activities aimed at meeting the expectations of employers, their deeper involvement in the training of specialists. In addition, a proactive approach to internships and employment turned out to be effective - the career, internship and employment centers were strengthened in the Higher Schools, weekly reporting at the Provost level was introduced, schools updated the format of work within the framework of Business Councils, the share of certifications and accreditations of educational programs from employers was increased.

Thus, by 2020, KAZGUU had achieved objective recognition in the provision of educational services, the development and implementation of modern educational programs, teaching methods and assessment of graduates' competencies. However, there is a strong inclination towards the applied academic direction (teaching) to the detriment of the development of research competencies (research). This necessitates the creation of a new development strategy for KAZGUU, with the transition to a new formational model - **a research university while maintaining all the advantages of applied (practice-oriented) education.**

In addition, it is important not only to preserve all the advantages of the existing educational process (constant updating, quality control, objectivity in the assessment of competencies), but also to organically integrate them with scientific research.

Obviously, not all learners and faculty possess necessary research skills and motivation. In this regard, the strategy of differentiation for both the profile of the graduate and the profile of the faculty will be justified, including the introduction of a new position "teaching professor". Those who want to start an academic research career should have the opportunity to gain access to postgraduate education, internships, workshops and other support measures for young researchers on preferential terms. The teaching staff who intend to take the highest career positions (full professor or professor emeritus) with the highest possible salary must meet the requirements at the international level, speak at least one foreign language, and constantly expand the geography of their cooperation with researchers from other universities.

More efforts are required to create a system for boosting the number of researchers. This is a long evolutionary process, but we are able to maximize our efforts and start training students for scientific schools already now. At the first stage, these will be measures aimed at attracting talented graduates of bachelor's and master's degrees to the next level of education with the possibility of full scholarship at the expense of the university. The next step should be to create conditions for their career growth and the presence of a permanent source of income (in the positions of a teaching assistant and research assistant, through a combined contract, etc.). In addition, they must be assigned to specific professors of higher schools up to obtaining a PhD in the relevant branch of science.

STRATEGY STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES

We have defined **5 (five) strategic themes (directions)** for the period 2021-2023, within which we must focus our efforts:

- 1 Quality education throughout life.
- 2 Innovative science and research.
- 3 Creation of innovative environment.
- 4 Internationalization and regional impact.
- 5 Student, faculty and staff satisfaction.

Each of the themes (directions) has its own weight, which in total make up 100%:

- 1 Quality education throughout life, weight – 25%.
- 2 Innovative science and research, weight – 25%.
- 3 Creation of innovative environment, weight – 15%.
- 4 Internationalization and regional impact, weight – 25%.
- 5 Student, faculty and staff satisfaction, weight – 10%.

Goals have been formulated for each theme (direction) reflecting the desired results in the most priority areas. At this level, our Strategic Plan (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy) accumulates specific priorities in the context of the next three years. The attainability and effectiveness of each of the goals is achieved through KPI indicators, which are multiplied depending on the number of departments responsible for their implementation.

KAZGUU Board approves a list of strategic KPI indicators for departments, monitors their implementation and adjusts as necessary.

Each department and (or) responsible head or official, on the basis of the list of strategic KPIs approved by the KAZGUU Board, determines performance indicators (KPI) for staff and faculty, plans their work and monitors the dynamics of achievement.

In addition, the Board determines the procedure for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy, checking decisions made for compliance with the Strategy, and also determines the procedure for monitoring the dynamics of achieving strategic KPIs and provides necessary conditions for this, including material, digital and human resources.

The list of strategic KPIs is subject to regular and proactive inspection.

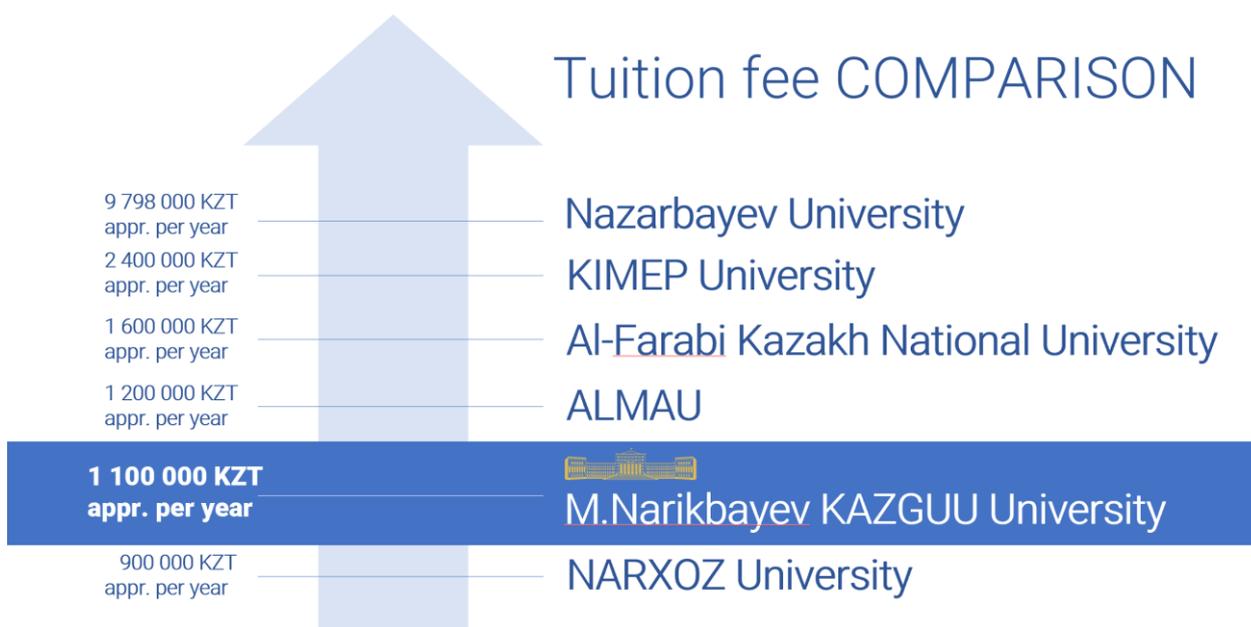
Regular inspection. Based on the results of each academic period lasting at least 15 weeks, the Board examines the issue of updating the list of strategic KPIs and, if necessary, adjusts them by re-approval by the decision of the Board.

Proactive inspection. Any interested person, in the event of circumstances requiring revision, updating or adjustment of KPI (personal or department's), sends their proposals to the Board, which are subject to mandatory consideration in accordance with the regulations of the executive body.

1 QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGHOUT LIFE

Since the mission of KAZGUU is to provide affordable and quality education, the most affordable price thresholds for educational services should be maintained for students and applicants. At the same time, it is necessary to maintain a balance and prevent a decrease in the cost of education to the detriment of quality, which is ensured by highly-paid faculty, investments in research and education, and constant improvement of infrastructure.

At the moment, KAZGUU is in the most optimal price range, offering the best level of quality of educational services for a set price in comparison with other universities (see the illustration below):



In addition to maintaining the balance of price and quality, the drop-out rate also demonstrates a decrease, which indicates the stability of choice in favor of KAZGUU when selecting a higher educational institution for education.

Thus, the total number of students at all levels (bachelor's, master's, PhD degrees) who were expelled for various reasons experiences a steady downward trend annually (See Diagram 1).



Diagram №1 «The share of expelled students from 2015 to 2021»

The share of students dropping out of their own accord from 2015 to 2021 has been almost halved every year since 2017 (See Diagram 2). At the turn of 2020-2021, this number stopped decreasing, amounting to 2.24% of the total student population.



Diagram №2 «The number of students dropping out of their own accord»

The reason for this, in our opinion, is the strengthening of the university's brand and its positioning as a leading university in Kazakhstan in terms of the quality of education¹; a high level of reputation among employers also plays an important role. This explains the reluctance of students to drop out of the university through expulsion, especially if they have the opportunity to choose the number of credits and independently regulate their own workload.

Thus, the concept of lifelong learning is implemented in KAZGUU systematically and progressively, which should be continued and consolidated as a strategic direction of development through the following strategic goals.

1.1 Development of academic quality assurance system

Academic quality is the most important condition for maintaining the attractiveness of KAZGUU as the center of academic processes, provider of educational services and flagship of higher education. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure the transparency of quality control procedures through their digitalization, institutional analysis and strengthening of the functionality of QA-profile units.

Since the distribution of grades according to the bell curve remains the standard of the League of Academic Integrity, we need to maintain its influence until the risks of lowering requirements for students, both at the university and national scale, are fully eliminated.

As a benchmark for the methodological quality of educational content, it is necessary to implement the export level of requirements, ensuring that our courses are recognized by the leading international online learning platforms. To scale educational content produced by the best faculty members, the proportion of blended-learning content and asynchronous, autonomous content should also be increased.

1.2 Compliance of educational programs with the standards of professional communities and modern labor market (national and international levels)

The statistics of successful employment shows a stable positive trend, which remained at a high level even at the end of 2020, when all countries, including Kazakhstan,

¹ In 2021, M. Narikbayev KAZGUU University took the first place among Kazakhstani universities in the rating of the quality of educational programs conducted by the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken".

experienced the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and economic stagnation (See Table 2²), and increased by almost 7% at the end of the three-year period, while the duration of the job search was reduced by 2 months.

Table 2. Dynamics of employment rate from 2018 to 2020.

Nº	INDICATOR	2018	2019	2020	Comparison 2018-2019	Comparison 2019-2020	3 years' total 2018-2020
1	AVERAGE EMPLOYMENT RATE, %	71,6	80,9	78,4	+9,3	-2,5	+6,8
2	AVERAGE DURATION OF THE JOB SEARCH, MONTH		3,7	1,6	-	-2,1	-
3	AVERAGE SALARY, KZT	123 771	143 118	152 366	+19 347	+9 248	+28 595

Thus, increasing the attractiveness of KAZGUU graduates for employers remains a long-term priority, and this indicator needs to be strengthened, focusing not only on the fact of employment, but on early employment, reducing the duration of job search after graduation from the university.

Another area of development is further deepening and expansion of certification and accreditation of educational programs by professional communities of international and national levels.

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to develop predictive analytics for the achievement of competencies by graduates of educational programs in order to ensure a more accurate adjustment of the learning trajectory and educational content.

1.3 Increasing access to socially significant products and services of the university

The vision of the university reflects our social role in society, which goes beyond only scientific and educational activities and is to use the available potential and resources to improve those spheres of public life and public administration in which problems are most sensitive for the population.

Kazakhstan is characterized by a generally low legal and financial literacy, which leads to an exacerbation of social conflicts, provokes fraudulent offenses, and negatively affects the living standards and incomes of the population. KAZGUU can and should generate content that is accessible to the level of understanding of ordinary people, provide them with legal support. It is also necessary to use the existing expertise in law enforcement, including legislative work and research in the field of public safety.

1.4 Diversity of methods and opportunities for increasing professionals' level of knowledge and development

In the context of the Strategy, both its own staff and faculty and experts from various fields of work and affiliation with different organizations are considered as professionals. Taking into account the shortage of high-level professionals on a national scale, it is a priority to create a Corporate University, which will provide systematic advanced training for staff and faculty, offering an approach to "train the existing personnel" instead of "hiring an external" professional. Hiring and contracting the most demanded niche specialists remains a means of eliminating the personnel shortage, but it ceases to be decisive in the strategic sense.

² *data as of March 2020 (9 months after 2019 graduation)

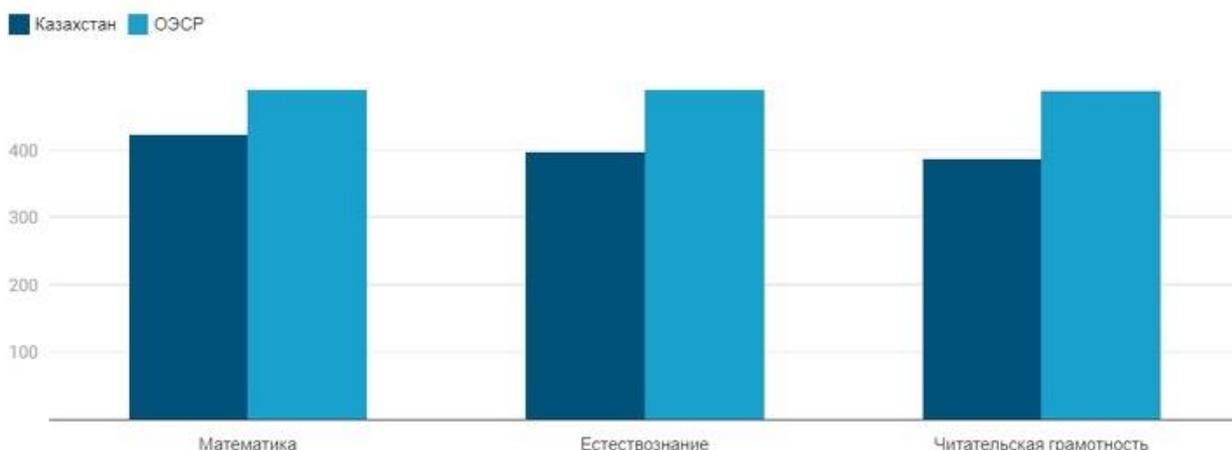
In addition, the permanent staff of KAZGUU is characterized by an established positive system of values, which is not yet widespread on the scale of most higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan. This determines the choice of the Strategy in favor of training, including the commercial component in the development and offer of demanded courses and programs.

1.5 Contribution to the development of secondary education system

The dependence of higher education on the level of secondary education and vocational training in Kazakhstan is a serious problem in connection with the accumulated problems in this area. Reforming the secondary education system, low social status of school teachers have remained the main reasons for a sharp decline in the level of competence of secondary school graduates for a long time. Despite the positive changes in the last two years, the expected positive outcome according to the most optimistic forecasts will be achieved no earlier than in 5-7 years.

According to the results of the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) in 2018, Kazakhstan took the last place among the CIS countries in terms of the level of functional literacy of schoolchildren (see illustration below)³.

PISA-2018: средние результаты Казахстана и ОЭСР



It is obvious that universities striving for an international level of recognition should use their potential and opportunities to reduce the negative consequences of secondary education for their applicants. The use of an in-depth training scheme for improving language skills, mathematical literacy and academic writing during the first year at the university is no longer sufficient. It is necessary to develop pre-bachelor's programs and partnership programs and courses with secondary educational institutions to ensure a sufficient level of preparation of school graduates for the university program.

The possibility of opening a subsidiary secondary school, in which the conditions, staffing and content will meet the requirements of KAZGUU, should be considered as a separate project.

³ Why did Kazakhstani school students fail an international exam PISA? // source: https://forbes.kz/process/education/pochemu_kazahstanskie_shkolniki_provalili_mejdunarodnyiy_ekzamen_pisa/

2 INNOVATIVE SCIENCE AND RESEARCH

2.1 Ensuring the continuity of scientific knowledge

A common problem for the academic sphere is the aging of scientific personnel, since the working conditions in most universities and scientific organizations are not attractive for talented young people. The corporate sector offers a salary 3-5 times higher than the average salary of a scientist in Kazakhstan, which, according to the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, is 129 thousand KZT (302 US dollars) per month.

With regard to the level of remuneration of the faculty, KAZGUU has always exceeded the level of remuneration for similar positions in most universities in Kazakhstan. The international ranking of full-time faculty, introduced in 2020, strengthened these advantages by offering conditions at the level of the corporate sector of the economy. Thus, investments in the payroll fund in KAZGUU are about 1.6 billion tenge annually and continue to grow.

Nevertheless, it is still quite difficult for a graduate of a bachelor's degree to experience the advantages of an academic career since he/she has years of study in master's and doctoral studies before he/she can be considered for a contract of this level. In this regard, it is necessary to invest in measures to support young researchers with the help of grants, research scholarships, and bonuses.

The effectiveness of each researcher at KAZGUU should also be measured not only by personal achievements and publications, but also by the systemic quality training of students who have achieved the award of an academic degree under their supervision.

2.2 Development of innovative research contributing to the society development

The emphasis in scientific research should be placed on the beneficial effect obtained by society and the state as a result of research. Since the university, unlike the state, always has an economically justified budget and is more focused on the efficient use of its funds, it is necessary to carefully determine the priority research areas that are subject to institutional financial support.

The current portfolio of research projects can be expanded provided there is a steady demand for research findings.

2.3 Development of research quality control system

International standards for scientific research should be organically implemented in everyday research practice, including the requirements for adherence to scientific research ethics.

It will also require increased transparency of the research process and the creation of an effective scientific management system, which, on the one hand, would facilitate and systematize research activities, and on the other hand, ensure the timely identification and elimination of emerging problems.

2.4 Internationalization of research

Modern research is impossible in an isolated environment - in addition to access to advanced scientific information, a collaboration of resources and different approaches to solving research problems is needed. The best way at the moment is to form

international research teams that within the framework of a specific topic can combine the potential of several world-class universities or research centers.

KAZGUU has such experience in the framework of World Bank projects, as well as in projects funded by the Science Committee of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. It is necessary to expand the understanding of approaches to the initiation of international research, using direct contacts with partner universities or professors with relevant research interests. As an advantage, one can consider a fairly dynamic practice of socio-economic transformations that are taking place in Kazakhstan and may be of research interest for foreign counterparts.

2.5 Transition from the “teaching (applied) university” model to “teaching & research university” model

As described in the introduction to the Strategy, it is necessary to ensure the sustainability of the advantages of the “teaching (applied) university” model, preventing a decrease in the quality of the educational process, while creating conditions for research environment at all levels. From the point of view of academic management, this may mean an increased focus at the level of postgraduate education, which would be viewed not as a platform for improving the qualifications of practicing specialists, but as a model for training a researcher for the academic environment.

In addition to the final transition to the international ranking of academic positions, it is necessary to introduce the practice of allocating budgets for research, delegating to individual professors the freedom to dispose of certain resources at their discretion (for additional support staff, scientific events, business trips, access to information, equipment, etc.).

It will also require a change in the system of coordination of research activities at the level of the Provost, Zimanov Academy of Legal and Economic Research subordinate to him and the Project Office of KAZGUU.

3 CREATION OF INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENT

A recognizable advantage of KAZGUU is the organization of a creative space for work and study, which helps to build an image of the site for events and communities from various fields. In a strategic sense, it is necessary to combine advanced design and material and technical equipment with learning and working environment that fosters creative thinking, generation of new ideas and approaches that anticipate current trends.

3.1 Digitalization of processes and development of descriptive and predictive analytics

Timely digitalization of the educational process enabled KAZGUU to successfully overcome the lockdown mode caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the next step should be not just the digitization of data, but the construction of analytical models on their basis, which will ensure competent and informed management decision-making. Descriptive and predictive analytics should become part of daily activities at all levels; during the implementation period of the Strategy, it is necessary to ensure the creation of all necessary technical and other resource conditions for this.

3.2 Identifying, motivating and supporting proactiveness, productivity and creativity in every employee, faculty member and student

KAZGUU considers human capital as the main driver of development, therefore, proactiveness and creativity should be constantly encouraged and developed as integral qualities of staff, faculty and students.

Increasing productivity should not be the aim of only the managerial staff, but also of every employee, faculty member and student. The practice of kaizen-walls has shown that most employees are poorly informed about the principles of economical production and the basics of efficient organization of their work. In this regard, it is necessary to provide full-scale training in the concept of kaizen to administrative and management personnel and faculty.

3.3 Continuous development of abstract thinking skills

Abstract thinking skills and intellectual creativity are the main trends of the near future. According to the World Economic Forum report on the future of jobs, by 2025 50% of all employees will require retraining and re-profiling as technology integration increases, while creativity, critical thinking, initiative and flexibility have consistently entered the top 10 skills⁴.

The predominance of applied disciplines will gradually give way to the disciplines of the philosophical and communicative nature, and all educational programs should be adjusted accordingly. The debate format should also become a permanent way of exchanging polarized opinions.

3.4 Creation of SCEN*-environment on campus (*S-mart, C-omfortable, E-fficient, N-etworking)

The campus infrastructure should continue to develop according to the SCEN model (smart, comfortable, efficient and networking). In addition to basic logistics solutions, it

⁴ These are the top 10 job skills of tomorrow – and how long it takes to learn them // <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/10/top-10-work-skills-of-tomorrow-how-long-it-takes-to-learn-them/>

is also expected to provide access to information and work from anywhere, individually and in teams, as well as conditions for physical activity and development.

3.5 Development of an innovative management model of an educational organization

KAZGUU will continue to broadcast the experience of transformations in academic management among higher educational institutions in Kazakhstan and Central Asian region through developed courses and programs for managers at all levels.

In addition, it is necessary to change and improve our own approaches to management in the direction of stimulating autonomy and reducing administrative control in exchange for productivity and creativity.

4 INTERNATIONALIZATION AND REGIONAL IMPACT

4.1 Enhancing the university international reputation

The international university reputation should be the result of specific achievements and activities, and not an end in itself, as measured by commercial rating agencies. For the CIS countries, there is a problem of entering such university rankings as QS or THE due to objective geopolitical and economic reasons, when, for example, in terms of the rate of international exchange, the integration of the European space will always surpass other regions, and in scientometric terms, foreign corporations have secured an almost monopoly influence on the market of scientific publications.

For the above reasons, KAZGUU strategically focuses on the content side of increasing its international reputation by strengthening its positions in competitions that assess student competencies, as well as expanding the geography of double-degree programs and joint co-financed projects.

4.2 Development of academic mobility and recruitment of international students, faculty and staff

The dynamics of inbound and outbound academic mobility of students and faculty is an important indicator of the pace of internationalization that is why KAZGUU will continue to focus its efforts in this direction. The increase in the number of international faculty and researchers at KAZGUU University also helps to enrich the academic culture and develop areas in which there are still no specialists of a similar level and profile at the national level.

4.3 Implementation of joint projects with international partners

The expert potential of KAZGUU allows us to equally participate in projects that coincide with our academic interests. However, it is necessary to strengthen international fundraising, attracting partner universities with which strong and productive relations have been established. A number of international projects involve mutual due diligence, which is also a good way to raise the level of internal standards (administrative and academic).

4.4 Development of language and communication skills of students, faculty and staff

Communication skills should be considered a basic condition for successful internationalization, since the geography of partnership is inextricably linked with effective and barrier-free communication. Knowledge of foreign languages by staff and faculty provides access to cutting-edge scientific information and ensures the exchange of research findings and other activities results.

In addition, the knowledge of the state language should also be a priority within the framework of this goal, since without the translation of international experience into the national context, the gap within the university environment will increase and information flows will be isolated.

4.5 Strengthening regional partnership and impact (CIS countries and Central Asia)

The realism of the prospects of the influence of KAZGUU is determined by the objective advantages of Kazakhstan in the region as a number of transformations in the socio-

economic sphere took place in our country before the rest of the CIS countries. Active economic development and demography of neighboring Uzbekistan generates a demand for appropriate consulting and quality education that we can offer, relying on the recognized accreditation of our educational programs. Also, according to our assessment, a number of CIS countries lag behind in the integration of the academic sphere with the European space in comparison with Kazakhstan and KAZGUU, in particular, which can become an additional advantage in competition in the educational services market.

5 STUDENT, FACULTY AND STAFF SATISFACTION

5.1 Improvement of administrative and academic support for students, faculty and staff

Student support should be based on the analysis of the state of their involvement, vulnerability and loyalty. Involvement presupposes their participation in the university life, including horizontal management models. The vulnerability of students is shown in a decrease in interest in learning, overcoming administrative and domestic problems, therefore, constant monitoring of satisfaction, mentoring and psychological support should be carried out on a systematic basis.

The level of satisfaction of faculty and staff will also be analyzed on an ongoing basis with analysis of the reasons for the most noticeable deviations.

5.2 Improvement of financial aid for students, faculty and staff

The general deterioration of economic indicators globally and nationally due to the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate financial problems for all categories of citizens. In this regard, KAZGUU for the entire period of implementation of the Strategy should provide an increase in the availability of financial aid with the help of the Endowment Fund, as well as special measures to support employees and faculty who find themselves in difficult life situations.

5.3 Support of student clubs and organizations

Upon return to the regular offline learning mode, an increased demand for student clubs and organizations is expected, which, in addition to creative and open thematic areas, should expand their field of activity by increasing the number of subject and intellectually oriented communities.