

Governance_and_Institutional_Decision-making_at_UMP_"Grigore_T._Popa"

UMF has a strong and committed leadership. This is evidenced not only by their effective planning and delivery of strategy over the last six years but also their ability to continue striving for their vision despite difficult operational circumstances. Expressions of support for the leadership of the university were present in all of the teams meetings.

UMF has a detailed strategic plan in place for the period 2012 ? 2015 that relates strongly to its mission and vision. Many proposed actions have already been realised which reflects effective strategic performance. These include key actions in curricula and cross curricula design, scientific research and service to society.

The plan was developed in a collaborative way and involved and engaged staff across the whole university. The written plan would benefit from elaboration in some areas, specifically some areas of development such as specific strategy for development of teaching and learning and internationalisation. The inclusion of benchmarks, intermediate indicators and monitoring instruments would also assist in measuring movement towards strategic achievement. The team recommend that the university define performance indicators and clearly identify benchmarks drawn from comparable institutions against all goals and objectives in the strategic plan 2012 ? 2015 and regularly monitor progress detailed in an action plan.

The university reports that the potential to realise the goals of the strategic plan is inhibited rather than facilitated by high levels of nationally coordinated, controlled and supervision from the state. This adversely impacts on the autonomy of the university. For example, the university has demonstrated positive financial management during the six-year period identified within the SER. This is particularly evidenced by the increase of income through non-state streams and the creation of a surplus each year. However the university is unable to direct this surplus towards meeting its strategic aims and lacks autonomy in the use of budget surplus and independently earned income to achieve strategic goals. The team recommends that the university continue to make efforts to persuade decision-makers to review institutional autonomy that combines accountability and responsibility with the independence to manage strategy, budget and procurement.

In terms of governance, the university has revised the structure and the role of the senate in line with the recent legislative changes. Whilst its terms of reference and modus operandi have been agreed and formalised within a contract, the role of senate in action according to the new law is not yet well defined. The team noted that the senate, according to the SER, generally approves strategic and operational management proposals and that this leaves scope for them to also disapprove of these actions. Whilst this situation has not yet arisen in practice the team believes it would be prudent to consider the implications of this in advance.

This belief was reinforced by the team hearing representatives of the senate describing the senate's role as 'controlling the rector'. This appears to give priority to the senate acting as a supervisory body for the rector whereas taking a greater responsibility in leading and developing strategy may more effectively enable the university to realise its mission. The senate needs to be proactive whilst at the same time building a co-operative relationship with the rector focused on strategic planning for the institution.

Having said this, the size of the senate may inhibit strategic decision-making as it may be too big with too many subcommittees. Some of these subcommittees can be merged, for example at the consultative level of postgraduate studies, taking into consideration that there is already a doctoral school operating. The effectiveness of the senate and speed of its decision-making processes should be kept under review, as the team consider that the senate is too big to fulfil its function.

The team also noted that restrictions on the appointment of staff had created shortfalls and imbalances across the university and had impeded strategic development. The university reported that this restriction had now been relaxed. The lifting of this restriction will enable the university to make key and critical appointments, which will, particularly in the area of research, help create focus and build critical mass.

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The university has made great efforts in developing a management system, which is inclusive and avoids an overt top down approach. Whilst a decentralised managerial and decisionmaking structure can be very democratic and gives everybody the possibility to be involved in changes it may slow down decision-making and swift responses to changing circumstances.

Additionally, pluri-layered sources of decision-making and sharing responsibilities are overlapping and not fully clear. The team and the team recommend that this is reviewed in order to ensure that decision-making takes place quickly and by those directly qualified to do so.

The quality of the administrative management, in spite of externally imposed budgetary restrictions, was noted as providing critical support in the effective management and despite the aforementioned observations, the team were impressed by the functioning of the leadership of the university, their collegiate approach and their strategic performance.