A STRATEGY FOR THE PLANNING AND CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

2006 - 2010

MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY

Contents

MFLU Research Strategy

1. Background to the document

Mae Fah Luang University is a relatively new autonomous university in Thailand; it was established in 1996. The university has made a major commitment to developing research with a view to meeting the needs of people at the local, national, and regional level. It also seeks to contribute to the national and international research effort in appropriate areas. The university believes that effective teaching programs should be informed by good research, as far as practicable, and aims to provide an enabling environment for its staff to develop their expertise and experience, and achieve fulfillment in their academic careers.

Development of a research 'culture' in a new university is arguably one of the most important academic challenges that it faces. This requires fostering a willingness to conduct research and engendering a strong commitment to and enthusiasm for research in its staff. With such an approach Mae Fah Luang aims to achieve competitiveness in research and create a research-based university.

To achieve this goal requires that a vision for research be developed, along with objectives, and strategies for achieving these objectives. The output from this exercise is a strategy document for the planning and conduct of research in the university; the outcome is a better operational base from which the university can make a more effective contribution to teaching and the needs of people at the local, national, and regional level.

This document outlines a strategy for meeting these objectives. It has been prepared as a basis for discussion, initially within the university but subsequently in other fora.

2. Vision

The vision for the new research direction at Mae Fah Luang University is that, by becoming a key provider, the university can start to make a substantial contribution to meeting the identified needs for research in the North of Thailand (within two years), in Thailand (within three years), in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (within five years), and internationally (within ten years). This will require that Mae Fah Luang University achieves competitiveness in research and becomes a research-based university; this also has a targeted time frame of ten years.

The vision for this strategy document for the planning and conduct of research at Mae Fah Luang University is to:

- Identify the human resources, facilities, and funding requirements **(The Means)** and
- Establish the internal management and processes required **(also The Means)**

with a view to:

- Establish a research 'culture' in a new university, which can undertake interdisciplinary research in priority areas **(The Process)** and
- Achieve competitiveness in research and position Mae Fah Luang as a research-based university **(The End)**

3. Objectives

1. Becoming a key provider for demand-driven research in three major areas, tea, tourism and environmental management, for which three centers of excellence will established. To achieve this, research will be developed in the following eight areas underpin the three major thrusts:
   - (i) Agriculture and food
   - (ii) Natural resources and environment
   - (iii) Health and aging
   - (iv) Information and communication technologies
   - (v) Materials and products
   - (vi) Tourism
   - (vii) Heritage, culture, ethnicity, and local wisdom
   - (viii) Policies and Laws

2. Developing human capability and increasing research effectiveness through partnerships and networking

3. Providing the necessary environment, atmosphere, and other supportive measures, including training, effective management, and incentives for staff.

4. Achieving competitiveness in research in terms of conduct, output, and outcome

4. Strategies

1. **Improve Funding for Research---the issue is *Financial Resources***

   1.1 Assess the needs of funding agencies and other sources (the demand)
      1.1.1 Acquire information from potential donors (using contact persons) within Thailand (Government, Non-government, and the private sectors) and overseas (particularly Australia, China, the European Union, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America); our research agenda should aim to address the priorities of these potential donors
      1.1.2 Become familiar with the procedures required to obtain funds
      1.1.3 Communicate all information on funding agencies and funding to staff via th web site but target effective researchers

1.2 Access funds through mutual cooperation
    1.2.1 Increase awareness through contacts, visits, and staff exchange at all levels
    1.2.2. Develop cooperation through joint research activities and seek joint funding

1.3 Develop proposals to match the varying needs of research
    1.3.1 Produce road maps (with a five-year time frame) for each of the eight research areas (clusters) with flexibility to accommodate changing needs and priorities
    1.3.2 Use effective mentors to develop proposals which address identified research priorities
    1.3.3 Follow up with the donor to optimize the chances of success

2. Development of Research Staff---the issue is *Human Resources*

2.1 Improve capacity to conduct research by providing appropriate training
    2.1.1 Enhance knowledge by training (MS staff to Ph.D.) by arranging sabbaticals, facilitating full participation at congresses and conferences, participating in exchange programs, and developing collaborative research programs
    2.1.2 Improve skills by providing training relevant to industries, postdoctoral training, and periodic in-house programs, facilitating full participation in technical workshops, and establishing a Visiting Scholar program at the university

2.2 Provide advisors and mentors and use participatory approaches, for research planning and operations
    2.2.1 Establish an Institutional Cooperation Program and a directory of external research consultants who can provide assistance with the planning and conduct of research
    2.2.2 Establish the Visiting Scholar Program
    2.2.3 Provide targets to staff for research

2.3 Provide opportunities for staff re-training and updating skills
    2.3.1 Facilitate participation of staff in training seminars in Thailand and seek opportunities for staff to re-train/update at overseas institutions

3. Public Exposure---the issues are *Networking, Partnerships, and Communication*

3.1 Involve ourselves in partnerships (with signed MOUs) and networks to improve our capacity to conduct research
    3.1.1 Identify potential private/government/international organizations for cooperation in areas of mutual interest
    3.1.2 Develop personal contacts with common interests and for mutual benefit
    3.1.3 Develop a win/win approach to research collaboration

3.2 Expose our ability, willingness, and commitment to participate in research
    3.2.1 Exchange printed materials with other institutions
    3.2.2 Develop a quality web site for the university, which gives adequate prominence to research on the homepage and clear links to research activities in the university, including to Research Services Division
    3.2.3 Prepare a portfolio of research personnel and document their achievements

3.2.4 Aim to develop research programs at the international level

3.2.5 Establish Mae Fah Luang University as an academic institution which recognizes achievements in research

3.3 Communicate our research finding to the scientific and general public in a timely way

3.3.1 Develop a university policy on research publications

3.3.2 Use the university web site to communicate our research findings and seek feed back

3.3.3 Provide support and assistance to staff with the preparation of publication including the use of English

3.3.4 Organize an annual conference to communicate research findings

3.3.5 Organize international conferences at the university on selected topics

3.3.6 Participate fully in research meetings

3.4 Enhance opportunities for staff to participate in research activities at the national and international level

3.4.1 Secure adequate funding from the university and other sources to allow st to publish their work at the national and international level

3.4.2 Encourage staff to develop links with the private sector to make their research more demand-driven and outcome-orientated

4. Supportive Measures---the issue is *management*

4.1 Policy environment

4.1.1 Establish a strong commitment from the University Council and senior management to develop and promote research within the university

4.1.2 Introduce a personnel management policy to actively encourage academic staff to develop their research in addition to teaching commitments, providi research capability building a career path

4.2 Physical environment

4.2.1 Develop improved research facilities, particularly laboratory, computing, an library facilities, to accommodate the needs of staff in a new research environment

4.2.2 Increase the number and enhance the effectiveness of research technicians in the university to better support the new research effort

4.3 Academic environment

4.3.1 Establish an in-house Graduate Research Fund

4.3.2 Improve performance in research, including planning and conduct

4.4 Operational environment

4.4.1 Ensure an environment of commitment and accountability, but with flexibilit in which research can flourish

4.4.2 Develop an 'agreement,' based on trust, in which the obligations and expectations of both the university administration and the researcher are clea and transparent

4.4.3 Improve the facilitation of the research management system