

STRATEGIES  
FOR PROMOTING UNIVERSITY -INDUSTRY-  
GOVERNMENT LINKAGES

Dhirawit Pinyonattagarn, Ph.D.  
Center for International Affairs  
Suranaree University of Technology  
Muang Nakhon Ratchasima 30000  
Thailand  
Fax 66 44 224140  
Phone 66 44 224142-5  
[dhirawit@ccs.sut.ac.th](mailto:dhirawit@ccs.sut.ac.th)

## Introduction

In the present age of globalization, the university system needs to become more responsive to society and produce graduates with a higher degree of responsibility and relevance to the needs of the country. It must improve its capacity to cater more proactively to the increasing demands of the economy and society and to strengthen its core mission as society's think tank or intellectual lighthouse. Likewise, the industrial sector needs to play a more active role in supporting and interfacing with universities for mutual benefits and integration of knowledge and experiences.

## General Strategies

These are the broad strategies and related actions recommended to achieve the above-mentioned goals:

### 1. Build More Public Understanding and Awareness

The notion of university-industry-government linkages must be incorporated into the mission of the universities. All public and private universities should be encouraged to develop their own strategic university-industry-government linkage plans which clearly set out definitions, guidelines, structures, and procedures to govern and guide the institution's interface with society in general, and industry in particular. The strategic plan must fit perfectly into the overall policy goals of working towards increased self-sufficiency and supporting industrial competitiveness. While building on a common theme and concepts, each university's plan must be appropriately based on the resources, environment, strengths, and future development vision of the relevant institution. Once the strategy plan has been complete, universities should make more efforts to make known the details of the plan both to university faculty and to outside communities which have a stake in the relationship.

## 2. Have Commitment and Vision

Commitment and vision are the most essential factor that will determine the success of university-industry-government linkage implementation. These two components must prevail on three sides: university, industry and government. What must be kept in mind is that commitment without vision is blind and vision without commitment is useless. The two elements should exist harmoniously together and complement each other.

## 3. Stimulate Concerted Efforts to Meet New Demands

As things stand, the educational needs of society are shifting and there is a clear path towards the provision of “life-long learning” and ongoing and continual education, especially in the science and technology areas. So, as universities move to meet these new demands and needs, the importance of searching for mechanisms which more explicitly involve the productive sector as a core component of the eventual solution must be stressed. On the government side, tax incentives to support the establishment of private industry retraining centers should focus mainly on supporting initiatives which involve university-industry-government collaboration.

## 4. Include Co-operative Education or Practice School as Part of the University Curriculum.

In the world of work, they do not require just graduates with a degree. They need more than that; they need working knowledge, hands-on experience, the ability to work and cooperate with others, good personality, and initiatives. In short, graduate’s employability is the heart of the matter. To cope with this new demand,

Suranaree University of Technology, Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand introduced Cooperative Education into its curriculum since its first year of operation, 1993. It has been regarded as the *first autonomous and innovative university in Thailand*.

#### 5. Promote Appropriate Mechanisms and Activities.

Relevant measures need to be put in place to support the development of linkage activities and mechanisms. Existing measures and programs that could relate to such activities should be refocused and redefined to offer special consideration to university-industry-government linkage. A number of these involve elements that could be modified slightly in terms of emphasis to give particular support to initiatives. These programs include the linkage development unit of the BOI (Board of Investment), the research and technical assistance programs of NSTDA (National Science and Technology Development Agency), the industry support activities of the MOI (Ministry of Industries), and the umbrella activities of NSDP (National Supplier Development Program).

#### 6. Improve the Flow of Communications and Information Technology

Communication is a key element of successful activities and measures to be taken to strengthen the mechanisms to facilitate communications. Liberalization in the telecommunications sector will finally deliver fruit as the additional two million lines in Bangkok and one million lines in the regional areas are coming on line. However, there remains the need to remove other obstacles such as the outdated Telecom Act of 1923. In addition to simply

facilitating general communications and exchange of information, the progressive introduction of information technologies will also be able to contribute greatly to broadening the range of many cooperation initiatives in all areas.

## 7. Promote University-Industry-Government Linkage as a Tool for Development

Regional Thai universities, such as Suranaree University of Technology Chiang Mai University, Khon Kaen University, and Prince of Songkhla University, were established with the intention of supporting regional development. They should play a critical role as a local knowledge base and a window into world knowledge depositories for local industries. Therefore, the linkage development for regional universities should be given special priority as an explicit policy measure to compensate for weaknesses in the level of knowledge infrastructure in the regional areas as compared to what is available in Bangkok. The establishment of interface mechanisms of all types can serve to supply services to the private sector in the area as well as compensating to some extent for the high communications costs of always having to go to Bangkok for such services. Special technical and financial support should be given to the regional universities in this respect.

## 8. Provide and Enhance Incentives and Support for Other Cooperation

Currently, the tax laws of Thailand provide little incentive for charitable donations. To facilitate the flow of resources, companies and individuals to aid university development in the forms of scholarships, endowments, professorial chairs, etc., full tax deductions should be provided. Furthermore, a mentality of supporting educational institutions should be encouraged through

better organized alumni activities and specific fund-raising campaigns. To enhance the relevancy of university education, more feedback should be encouraged, partly through the increased private sector participation in universities at all levels, particularly in curricula development.

#### 9. Establish a Proper Co-ordinating Center for the University–Industry-Government Linkages.

A center for coordinating the activities and mechanisms for the linkages between the university, industry, and government should be established to implement plans and activities, and enhance productive relationship among them. However, it has to be a real focal point with qualified personnel and up-to date facilities, not just a premise without knowledgeable staff and modern facilities.

#### 10. Be a Member of Professional Organizations.

It is necessary, in the present day, to be a part of each other to coordinate, cooperate, communicate, and compete. Together, we develop and prosper. So, partnership of the stakeholders should be considered an important step towards more sustainable progress in the implementation of university-industry-government linkages. Professional associations should be encouraged to play a bigger role in the development and accreditation of university programs.

### Conclusion

All the ten strategies mentioned above, if followed appropriately, can contribute to the sustainability and progress of the linkages among the university, industry, and government in Thailand as well as in other countries. They should constitute a common ground for the tripartite linkages and serve as “Ten

Commandments” for mutual advantages and recognition. The ten strategies can be, nevertheless, summarized in just three words: Actions, More Actions, and More and More Actions.