

**“DEFENDING THE UNIVERSITY:  
ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE”  
JUNE 20-21, 2008, VILNIUS, LITHUANIA**

A symposium celebrating the 15th Anniversary of the European Humanities University and the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Scholars at Risk (SAR) Network

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS FOR FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES**  
(as of June 21, 2008)

The overall goal of the symposium is not only to encourage greater understanding but also positive action aimed at strengthening academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The organizers have invited participants to submit proposals for follow-up activities, including the following proposals received to date:

**Proposal #1: Resolution in support of EHU**

The proposal is that those assembled at the symposium endorse a statement in support of EHU, recognizing its success in continuing its liberal education mission despite being forced into exile; its importance as a model of resistance to attempts to eliminate academic freedom and institutional autonomy; and its invaluable contributions as a host institution for threatened scholars. [Irving Epstein, SAR]

**Outcome: Approved. Copy of resolution attached.**

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**Proposal #2: Invitation to universities to join Scholars at Risk**

The proposal is that academics and higher education leaders at the symposium work to encourage their respective institutions to become members of the Scholars at Risk Network, and as members to join in SAR activities to promote academic freedom and to defend threatened scholars and universities worldwide. [Robert Quinn, SAR]

**Outcome: Approved. Invitation extended.**

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**Proposal #3: Invitation to establish national or regional SAR sections**

The proposal is that academics and higher education leaders at the symposium [who are able], with the support of the SAR office and staff, [work to encourage] the universities in their country or region to organize into national or regional SAR sections, that will contribute to SAR activities to promote academic freedom and to defend threatened scholars, in ways best suited to local, national or regional interests and conditions. [Sinead O’Gorman, SAR]

**Outcome: Approved (with minor modifications above). Invitation extended.**

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**Proposal #4: Academic Freedom Day**

Academic freedom is a core right of scholars around the world. It needs and deserves

continuous attention. One of the instruments to achieve this is the celebration of a worldwide Academic Freedom Day, which would enable universities, academies, and scholarly networks to dedicate annual attention to the rights of universities (institutional autonomy) and scholars (academic freedom) worldwide. It would be the day of an Annual Lecture on Academic Freedom, and of related teaching and student activities and events. It could then receive the same publicity as, for example, the annual World Press Freedom Day on 3 May. The proposal is to form a small committee to draft a letter and solicit co-signatures from academic NGOs and university partners before submitting it to UNESCO and/or the International Association of Universities in time for the next UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in 2009. The letter would request the establishment by UNESCO of 11 November (date of the approval of UNESCO's *Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* (1997)) or another suitable day as Academic Freedom Day. [Antoon De Baets, NCH]

**Outcome: Approved.** After some objections to 11 November and discussion of more appropriate dates to recommend, suggestions including 4 August (the date EHU was closed in Belarus); 4 June (end of Tiananmen Square student demonstrations); 18 September (signing of the Magna Charta Universitatum), a committee was established to draft a letter and solicit signatures before submitting to UNESCO, IAU or other bodies. Committee members include Antoon de Baets (the Netherlands); Vera Rich (UK); Gigi Tevzadze (Georgia) and Robert Quinn (SAR).

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#### **Proposal #5: Invitation to universities to join the Magna Charta Universitatum**

The proposal is that universities represented at the symposium attend the Celebrations of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Magna Charta Universitatum in Bologna, Italy on September 18-20, 2008 including, if they have not already done so, becoming signatory universities to the Magna Charta of European Universities. [Michael Daxner, Magna Charta Observatory]

**Outcome: Approved. Invitation extended.**

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#### **Proposal #6: Autonomy, Responsibility & Academic Freedom at the WCHE 2009**

The 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education included 'Autonomy, Social Responsibility and Academic Freedom' as one of central discussions, and the concluding "World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" urged priority action on these themes at the national level and the level of systems and institutions. The Declaration also urged UNESCO to take the initiative on drawing up an international instrument on academic freedom, autonomy and social responsibility in connection with the Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel. With the next World Conference on Higher Education now scheduled for July 2009, the proposal is to form a small committee to draft a letter and solicit co-signatures from academic NGOs and university partners before submitting it to UNESCO and/or the International Association of Universities, urging that 'Autonomy, Social Responsibility and Academic Freedom' again be included as a central theme of the conference and plan of action; urging that UNESCO renew its commitment to the

establishment of an international instrument on academic freedom, autonomy and social responsibility; and offering the assistance of the signatories in advancing these aims. [John Akker, CARA]

**Outcome: Approved. Committee established.** Committee members include John Akker (CARA); Anatoli Mikhailov (EHU); Irving Epstein (IWU); Robert Quinn (SAR).

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**Proposal #7: Student involvement in SAR committees**

University members of the Scholars at Risk Network are encouraged, but not required, to establish an interdisciplinary committee of faculty members and administrators to coordinate their participation in Network activities. Recognizing the valuable contributions which students have made to SAR activities, and their direct interest in questions of academic freedom, it is proposed that SAR issue a recommendation to university members that student representatives be included on their local SAR committees. [Lauren Herman, Harvard University] **Outcome: Approved.**

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**Proposal #8: Develop a “World Ranking of Universities by Academic Freedom”**

Many universities are not adequately recognized for their positive efforts to promote and respect academic freedom and related values. The proposal is to develop a ranking system to allow these positive efforts to be certified by objective outside organizations, which will create positive pressure for further administrative recommendations and bring more attention to efforts to promote academic freedom. [Gigi Tevzadze, Ilia Chavchavadze State University]

**Outcome: Committee formed to explore feasibility.** Committee members include Gigi Tevadze (ICSU); Vladimir Dounaev (EHU); Hoda Almutawah (Arab Society for Academic Freedom); Robert Quinn (SAR).

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**Proposal #9: International Moot Court Competition**

There is a well-known International Moot Court Competition for law students. Every year the competition organizers invent a mock international case, which students then debate. The proposal is to ask the administrators to include an academic freedom related issue next year. This would encourage students/teachers in hundreds of universities around the world to discuss the particular case and academic freedom issues on a local and international level. [Anna Dolidze, Georgia, New York University School of Law].

**Outcome: Approved.** Committee established to develop formal proposal. Committee members include Anna Dolidze (Georgia); Gregory Prince (USA); Turgut Tarhanli (Turkey); Robert Quinn (SAR).

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## **Additional proposals for future consideration** (arising too late for full discussion at the symposium)

### **Proposal #10: Intersection of quality and academic freedom/autonomy**

In some places the major threat to higher education values is not violence or extreme restrictions but rather a lack of effective procedures or reforms that ensure high quality scholarship and education. The proposal is for SAR and its partners to develop activities which encourage a culture of quality/excellence within a framework of academic freedom and autonomy. [Yevhen Bystrytsky, International Renaissance Foundation]

**Status:** SAR to explore possible activities/partnerships.

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### **Proposal #11: Engaging with host governments on visa issues**

Aside from funding, sometimes one of the biggest challenges of hosting scholars is securing visas for them and their family members. The proposal is to explore ways SAR members might develop lobbying or other relationships with the visa authorities of their respective countries, as a means of expediting visa applications. [Lauren Herman, Harvard University].

**Status:** SAR invites comments and suggestions.

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### **Proposal #12: Sabbatical/other visits promoting academic freedom**

In places where faculties, universities or entire higher education systems are under threat or otherwise lack full enjoyment of academic freedom and related values, long- and short-term visits from colleagues in other countries might provide valuable moral and intellectual support and example. The proposal is to explore ways to encourage scholars from SAR network member institutions and elsewhere to undertake solidarity visits while on sabbatical leave, research or teaching leave or other leaves. [Sarah Willcox, IIE Scholar Rescue Fund].

**Status:** SAR invites comments and suggestions.

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### **Proposal #13: Explore ethical and cross-cultural basis for academic freedom**

The terms ‘academic freedom’ and ‘institutional autonomy’ may not be familiar in all countries or may have different interpretations, but the underlying meanings resonate with many universal ethical principles, including for example in the concept of “muruwa.” The proposal is to explore universal ethical and cultural principles which might reinforce contemporary appeals to academic freedom and autonomy. [Hoda Almutawah, Arab Society for Academic Freedom].

**Status:** SAR invites comments and suggestions.

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