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NEWARK, DELAWARE
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COORDINATOR OF RESEARCH

November 5, 1970

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Mr. Wilbur Waffle
NESA Education Office USAID
Department of State
Washington, D. C. 20521

Dear Bill:

Last Spring, when I decided to go to Afghanistan on personal business during the Summer, I mentioned to you my continued interest in the Faculty of Engineering and said that I would give you an informal report on it when I returned. During my stay in Afghanistan from August 6th to 28th, I visited the Faculty twice and talked with Afghan Staff Members and members of the U.S. Engineering Team. It was during the Jeshyn holiday and so there were no classes, but there was still considerable activity at the Faculty.

Present Situation: In general I was very pleased with the progress that has been made in the two years since I left the Faculty. The laboratories seem to be well maintained and organized and the building is in good shape, although it showed evidence of poor basic maintenance; i.e., water damage from delayed roof repairs. Progress on the addition to the building has been considerable, but the construction is proceeding much slower than I had expected. However, it looks now as if it will be closed in before Winter and completed within a year. The rate of construction compares favorably with that of the Polytechnics at Jangalok and Mazar-i-Sharif, which were started in the mid-60's and are not yet completed, but it not moving nearly as fast as the new general classroom building. The rapid rate of construction of the classroom building shows that they can build rapidly when the top administration wants it done.

The seismic program seems to be very successful, largely due to the efforts of Professor Heuckroth. It is functioning well and has had an international impact in its field. It remains to be seen if it can continue to operate under Afghan supervision. Although this activity is peripheral to engineering education, I believe that it can have an important influence on the Afghan acceptance of the Faculty as an important Afghan institution in fields other than teaching.

The present staff situation at the Faculty is satisfactory in that it has progressed as fast as one could expect, but it is rapidly becoming unstable due to the general conditions of Afghan development, and it must be given careful attention if the staff is to remain with the Faculty and be a positive factor in its growth. The majority of the staff members with whom I talked showed a feeling of restlessness and an undefined dissatisfaction with their situation. Although this attitude is not desirable, it is not surprising when one considers their experience during the past few years. These men had an early background in an

undeveloped society where they were exposed to poverty and archaic social conditions. They then attended middle and secondary schools that were based on foreign concepts and represented a sharp cultural break with their childhood. From these schools they were sent for study in the United States which has an advanced economy that offers great opportunities to scientists and engineers. After two to four years in this advanced culture, where their fellow students were heading for professionally attractive and highly paid positions, these men returned to Kabul and to much less attractive professional positions. The teaching assignments are at a relatively low level, the pay is very low, there is little encouragement to do research, and there is little evidence that the situation will change appreciably for many years. It is no wonder that these highly trained men are restless. They have been moving fast for the past six or eight years and they want to keep on moving. They feel that they have knowledge, skills, and techniques that can be used outside of the University, and if the situation in the University is not attractive to them, they will use every means possible to move to where the rewards are greater. Their recent experiences have given them a mobility that can benefit or harm the Faculty depending upon how they are treated. The returned participants are the key factor in the success or failure of the Faculty and something must be done to keep them growing professionally within the Faculty.

Future Plans: During my visit I was able to talk with John Nankivell, the departing USET Program Director, before he left. Ed Friedman, the new Program Director, spent quite a bit of time with me discussing Faculty development plans. I believe that all three of us are in general agreement on the type of continuing program that is needed to produce a Faculty that meets the needs of Afghanistan, but each of us had somewhat different ideas on how it should be carried out. Dr. Friedman has proposals for staff development that I believe are excellent and should be given serious consideration. My own assessment of the situation and the course of action to follow are:

I. Provide opportunities for professional development

a. Maintain one foreign advisor in each discipline who will provide support and training for teaching and research at the Faculty,
b. Provide a moderate amount of Afghanis each year to support research. This money should be furnished by the RGA with a matching amount by USAID in Afghanis or in dollars if foreign exchange is needed. The money should be made available, through a faculty research committee, as sub-grants to individuals who then will be responsible for the proper use of the money, but will not be hampered by government red tape.
c. Have a five-year plan for foreign training that is up-dated each year so staff members will know when their time is scheduled for foreign training. A good part of this training should be done in neighboring countries and not in Western countries. A staff member should have at least one tour in an Asian country for each tour in a more advanced country.
d. Demand active support from the RGA in placing staff members as paid consultants in the development activities of the country. Capital developments such as the Kajaki power project, the Mazar to Herat road improvement, and the new textile mills should have as part of their budgeted expenses, one or more faculty consultants

who would spend 20% to 30% of their time in the field working on the project. This procedure would give the faculty members first-hand knowledge of the basic industrial development of the country and would make them feel some responsibility for the development.

II. Provide satisfactory housing for faculty members

Subsidized faculty housing on or near the University campus should be provided. Staff members returning from abroad have had the experience of living in modern housing and desire it for themselves and their families. Modern, reasonably priced, housing would give them strong ties to the University and would make the low pay that they receive more acceptable. There is precedent for this in all of the neighboring Asian countries, and I believe that it will be necessary in Afghanistan.

The establishment of a strong institution that, by its very nature, must deviate from the norms of the country cannot be accomplished quickly. As a rough estimate, I would say the Faculty of Engineering is about half way toward being a viable institution, and that another seven to eight years of external support will be needed before the Faculty is able to operate by itself. During this period only a small amount of assistance in the form of equipment and supplies will be needed and the main emphasis should be upon building up the role of faculty members in teaching, research and external engineering service. The decreased number of advisors and the use of Asian countries for the major part of training should lower the yearly cost considerably, but the total duration of direct assistance should not be less than 15 to 20 years. No matter how good the program may be, if it is stopped before the Afghan group is strong enough to handle both operations and growth, the institution will rapidly decrease in quality and the major value of the program will be lost.

I am firmly convinced that no educational institution can maintain an excellent and relevant program of teaching and scholarly effort without a continual exchange of ideas and personnel with other educational institutions. We in the United States have gained much from the continual world-wide exchange of teachers and post doctoral scholars that our colleges and universities now encourage. It is even more important that teachers in a small, isolated, institution such as the University of Kabul have a continual infusion of ideas, and an opportunity to present their own ideas through discussions with visiting scholars. Therefore, starting as soon as possible, a program of visiting professors and exchange professors should be developed outside of the USAID program, but with its advice and assistance. Such a program might reduce the cost to USAID during the final years of the program and would make it easier to reach the decision on when to end the USET program.

I hope that my impressions, and the resulting conclusions, will be of interest and value to you. It was a real pleasure to see the progress that has been made. The Faculty now has the appearance of an Afghan institution with foreign advisors instead of a foreign institution with Afghan participants as it was three or four years ago.

During November, I expect to be in Washington from the 8th to the 11th for the Land Grant College Meeting, and from the 15th to the 18th for the Research Administrator's Meeting. I'll get in touch with you when I am there and would like to discuss the Afghan educational situation with you.

Sincerely yours,

OPBergelin

Olaf P. Bergelin

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