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Investing in the Future: Rebuilding Higher Education in Myanmar

Report on the IIE Myanmar Initiative

April 2013
Institute of International Education

A Briefing Paper from IIE's Center for International Partnerships

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Foreword: Making History by Investing in the Future[1]

By Allan E. Goodman, President and CEO, Institute of International Education

The Institute of International Education's delegation to Myanmar last month had an unusual start. Dr. Catherine Raymond, a faculty member at Northern Illinois University who curates the Burmese art collection there, was a part of our group and had taken on the mission to give back to Myanmar a Buddha sculpture created more than 1,000 years ago. At a ceremony with the minister of culture, we learned that the return of the Buddha was not an easy thing.

The university had wanted to give it back some 10 years ago, when it realized that the sculpture had been stolen from the pagoda at Pagan. But there were practically no relations between the United States and Myanmar. UPS would not take charge of such a rare artifact, and there were no funds available to defray the cost of transport. But professors who love their field have a way of prevailing.

Dr. Raymond's university has the only Center for Burma studies in the United States, and it has been operating since the 1980s. She is one of a handful of scholars who studied Burma during all the difficult years and is now part of opening its educational space. Sometimes, it seems, a career in international education involves as much diplomacy as it does research.

Our delegation was a part of IIE's International Academic Partnerships Program, and the 10 U.S. campuses that took part were eager to explore potential partnership opportunities. This is also part of a broader IIE Myanmar higher education initiative that seeks to help the country rebuild its higher education capacity. It was the largest delegation of U.S. universities to travel to Myanmar, and we were accompanied by representatives of the U.S. Embassy and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. We visited nine universities throughout Myanmar and engaged in in-depth discussions with several government ministries, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science and Technology and Ministry of Health.

As the first step to building deeper academic engagement between our two countries, the delegation members gave extremely well-received lectures and workshops for more than 1,000 faculty and students. We covered such topics as finding and making strategic partnerships, faculty development and accreditation processes and procedures.

This is a critical juncture for engaging with Myanmar. Some investors predict that the country's gross domestic product will double in the next five years. It shows signs of opening up to business and investment, and a number of multinational companies are poised to enter the market. This is a real opportunity, and IIE is ready to work with corporations and investors who are interested in developing talent to support this growth. Myanmar clearly needs a higher education system that can produce students capable of critical thinking and innovation, as well as an investment in infrastructure – internet, libraries, teaching and laboratory facilities – and the kind of applied research that will benefit students and industry alike.

[1] This article was originally published as an Op-Ed in *University World News*.

The role of higher education cannot be underestimated. Higher education, NGOs, funding agencies and the private sector all have responsibilities in helping countries in transition with reform and development. We need close coordination of resources and efforts, so we don't have numerous organizations vying to fund or accomplish the same things. Even better would be coordination of efforts on a multinational level, and higher education is uniquely positioned to achieve this. And it is vitally important to listen to leaders in Myanmar about what is important to them.

Some initial indications regarding areas of need include: English language training for teachers; sharing of best practices; building capacity for university administrators to develop international programs and partnerships; training and curriculum development in the areas of law, international relations and public administration; and skills development in areas such as research proposals and collaboration, quality assurance and teaching methodologies. As IIE has done through initiatives such as the WISE Program for Education Leadership and a series of training workshops and conferences in Iraq, we look forward to working with funders to develop innovative and responsive programs.

There are some very positive indications already. As immediate follow-up to our productive visit, members of the delegation to Myanmar have announced concrete university-led initiatives that will benefit citizens, students and faculty from both countries (see page 30).

Fulbright exchanges between our two countries have resumed, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Meghann Curtis announced that the State Department will once again welcome and encourage university faculty, administrators and government employees throughout the country to apply for the Fulbright scholarship program to complete a Master's degree in the United States. And a number of U.S. scholars who have remained engaged with Myanmar over the years, including several members of our delegation, are renewing their connections.

What made the ceremony for the Buddha's return particularly poignant was the surprise the Myanmar officials had arranged. That morning officials had flown in the bottom part of the sculpture. For the first time since it had cracked apart in an earthquake in the 1970s, the Buddha was on its way to becoming whole.

It was a very good omen for a visit aimed at reconnecting institutions and people whose diplomatic relations date back to 1857, when the Burmese King Mindon reached out to President James Buchanan in order to promote commercial relations for the benefit of his nation's many poor.

So many officials and academics with whom we met called our visit historic. We also now hope to make history by what we can do next in the cause of expanding and improving relations between our people and countries.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At an address at the Asia Society during the UN General Assembly, President U Thein Sein discussed the critical role of civil society in maintaining a democratic and harmonious society, and cited more U.S.-Myanmar collaboration as a vehicle for much-needed human capacity development. President Thein Sein pledged in his inauguration speech last year to improve education and seek foreign expertise to lift standards to international levels. The government has increased the country's education budget from $340 million to $740 million this year, and has begun to implement wide-ranging reforms.

In response to this need for human capacity development and the opening up of diplomatic ties between the United States and Myanmar, IIE launched an institute-wide Myanmar Higher Education Initiative. Fueled by IIE's work in fostering international partnerships, the initiative includes a series of bi-national conference calls to discuss higher education cooperation between the U.S. and Myanmar, a U.S. university delegation to Myanmar, and follow-on activities aimed to developing capacity at higher education institutions in Myanmar.

The central component of the initiative is IIE's International Academic Partnership Program (IAPP) with Myanmar, a six-month program that helps U.S. colleges and universities develop a strategic plan for partnering with counterparts in Myanmar. In addition to the February 2013 delegation, participating universities have joined informational webinars, conducted a guided strategic planning exercise on engaging with Myanmar, and benefited from expert mentorship.

This report focuses on the historic U.S. higher education delegation to Myanmar in February 2013. It was the largest delegation of U.S. universities to travel to Myanmar. Led by IIE's President and CEO Allan E. Goodman, the delegation included representatives from 10 U.S. higher education institutions, the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, and the U.S. Department of State, including Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Academic Programs Meghann Curtis.

The report presents findings from the visit and includes observations on the context of higher education in Myanmar, an analysis of needs facing the sector, and recommendations to support partnerships and academic exchanges. It is our hope that this report will provide policy makers, foundations, private sector corporations, and higher education professionals with an overview of potential areas for engagement; and will help facilitate the timely implementation of much-needed higher education capacity building activities that will be critical for the next phase of Myanmar's economic development.

Key findings include:

- In considering international educational cooperation, key contextual issues need to be taken into account, including the political context; the lack of social capital; the current lack of capacity to build international ties; the educational context; and the centralization/decentralization of bureaucracy and higher education.

- The Myanmar government has made reform of the entire higher education system a national priority. One of the main drivers is the recognition of the important role of human capital to the economic development goals of the country.

- There is a very high level of enthusiasm and energy for addressing Myanmar's pressing needs in higher education among university administrators, faculty and students. However, the challenges and needs currently exceed the capacity of the political and economic system to respond effectively.

- The needs of higher education in Myanmar are extensive, from physical infrastructure and information technology, to the academic curriculum, the upgrading of the quality of faculty, reform higher education administration and governance, and international engagement.

- Despite the many challenges, small-scale interactions with higher education institutions in Myanmar will help not only to address a number of immediate needs, but also to create the partnerships that can lay the groundwork for larger engagements.

- Recommendations for short- to mid-term goals for U.S.-Myanmar higher education cooperation include:
    - Expanding person-to-person networks through faculty and staff exchanges;
    - Helping inform the vision of Myanmar higher education through cooperation in curriculum development and basic research methods, as well as exposure to modern teaching methodologies and organizational/administrative issues;
    - Assisting in infrastructure development, especially related to libraries and science facilities;
    - Enhancing English language capacity of academic staff to teach effectively in English;
    - Better coordination of resources and current efforts, to avoid redundancy, maximize leveraging from individual initiatives and provide the greatest possible benefit from those limited resources.

INTRODUCTION

Following on the heels of President Obama's historic trip to Myanmar in November 2012 and his stated commitment to advance education, the Institute of International Education (IIE) launched an institute-wide initiative involving the participation of 10 U.S. higher education institutions in a strategic planning process for developing institutional partnerships with universities in Myanmar and to assist in rebuilding higher education capacity in the country.

For the past several decades, educational ties have been stunted between the United States and Myanmar, with little university-to-university engagement, diminished student and scholar flow between the two countries, and very limited research collaboration. According to the 2012 *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, 807 students from Myanmar studied in the U.S. in the 2011/12 academic year; with an average of only 717 students over the past decade. This pales in comparison to the number of students from peer countries, such as Thailand and Vietnam, which sent 7,626 and 15,572 students to the U.S. in the 2011/12 academic year, respectively.

The U.S. study abroad figure is even bleaker, especially considering that the number of Americans studying in Myanmar rose to a decade high in the 2010/11 academic year of 29 students. Again, peer countries of Thailand and Vietnam hosted considerably more students from the United States; 881 American students in Vietnam and 1,410 in Thailand. IIE's Myanmar initiative seeks to increase academic exchange and collaboration on all fronts by fostering long-term partnerships between higher education institutions in the two countries.

IIE's Myanmar Higher Education Initiative

The IIE Myanmar Higher Education Initiative takes a multi-pronged approach to increasing educational ties while assisting in capacity building.

The core component of the initiative is the International Academic Partnership Program (IAPP), the flagship program for IIE's Center for International Partnerships in Higher Education. Since 2009, IAPP has assisted U.S. colleges and universities to develop a strategic plan for building mutually beneficial partnerships with counterparts abroad. In addition to Myanmar, the Center has worked with over 80 U.S. higher education institutions to engage with China, India, and Brazil, and is expanding to offer programs focusing on Vietnam and Cuba. Over the course of this year-long program, institutions participate in a number of partnership training activities, such as forming a campus task force, conducting an institution-wide inventory of activities pertaining to these countries, and developing a partnership strategy for the focus country. Each participating institution is also paired with an expert mentor who serves as a guide throughout the strategic planning process.

In contrast to previous IAPP programs on Brazil, China and India, the institutions selected for the 2012-2013 IAPP Myanmar program had fairly significant prior experience with the country, whether through students and faculty on campus, diaspora communities, or through previous

work in the country. In addition, IAPP Myanmar is broader in scope than previous partnership programs, as it seeks to utilize partnerships as a means for supporting human capacity development. However, the 10 institutions were selected based on similar criteria to other programs. They all demonstrated a commitment to developing long-term, multi-faceted partnerships; showed a deep interest in internationalizing their campuses; pledged to assemble a campus-wide steering committee; and demonstrated a need for assistance in developing a strategic plan for partnering with Myanmar.

Participating Universities in IIE's International Academic Partnership Program in Myanmar

- American University
- Arizona State University
- Ball State University
- Hawaii Pacific University
- Northern Illinois University
- Northern Arizona University
- Rutgers University
- Samford University
- University of Massachusetts, Lowell
- University of Washington

IIE's Myanmar initiative also includes a series of bi-national conference calls on higher education in Myanmar. Two conference calls were held in December 2012 and in April 2013. Recordings of the calls are available on IIE's website. Other components of the initiative include the February 2013 U.S. higher education delegation to Myanmar; this report; and a project to help Myanmar universities develop international education offices (see page 28 for more details).

U.S. Higher Education Delegation to Myanmar

A key component of IIE's Myanmar initiative was a U.S. higher education delegation to Myanmar from February 24 – March 1, 2013, which, at the time of publication, is the largest delegation of U.S. universities to travel to Myanmar to date. Allan Goodman, the Institute's President & CEO, led the one-week delegation, together with Meghann Curtis, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). Accompanying the delegation were other representatives from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the U.S. Embassy, and a few private sector organizations. A full list of delegation participants and the final agenda are included in Appendix A.

The delegation included a number of core elements, comprised of:

University Site Visits
Delegates visited a total of nine universities in Yangon and Mandalay, including Yangon University, Yangon Technological University, the University of Mandalay, and the Myanmar Institute of Theology. The purpose of the site visits was for participants to: (1) better understand the current state of higher education in Myanmar; (2) gain a broad, first-hand perspective on the existing infrastructure, both physical and administrative, at Myanmar universities; and (3) engage in in-depth dialogue with local counterparts about areas of need and areas of potential collaboration. In addition to learning about the programs and opportunities at Myanmar universities, the delegates – representing both the university sector and the U.S. government – shared information about campus exchanges, visiting faculty schemes, expanded opportunities with the Fulbright program, and other ECA-sponsored bilateral exchange programs.

University Lectures
In order to begin engaging in a meaningful way with local counterparts, the U.S. delegates presented lectures on a number of topics that were requested by the Myanmar universities. Topics included "The Role of the University in Civil Society," "Women and Gender History as Taught in the United States," and "Accreditation and Quality Assurance." The delegates presented lectures at five of the nine universities. More than 1,000 lecturers, staff, and students attended the lectures.

Roundtable Discussions with Ministries
While in Naypyidaw, Myanmar's capital, the delegation met with representatives from several government ministries, including the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Science & Technology, and the Ministry of Health. Meetings included a high-level roundtable discussion between U.S. delegates and ministry representatives, and individual visits to the ministries for more in-depth dialogue.

U.S. University Leaders Give Public Lectures in Myanmar

Members of the IIE delegation presented engaging and interactive lectures on a variety of topics at universities in Myanmar. Approximately 1,000 faculty, staff, and students attended in total. In several cases, this was the first time a U.S. academic gave a lecture at the institutions.

Lecture topics included:

- Accreditation and Quality Assurance
- University Management
- Internationalizing the Campus
- Promoting Engaged Learning Among Students
- The Role of Higher Education in State Building
- The Role of the University in Civil Society
- Trends in General Education
- Women's and Gender History as Taught in the United States

I. THE CURRENT POLITICAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT IN MYANMAR

Contributing Author: Carola Weil, Dean, School of Professional & Extended Studies, American University

Myanmar (also known as Burma) has opened itself to the world at seemingly lightning speed. April 2013 marks the first anniversary of the historic U.S. announcement that it was normalizing diplomatic relations with the country. During the past year, rapid changes have resulted in the suspension of economic sanctions and the first visit to Myanmar by a U.S. president. President Thein Sein's government has released hundreds of political prisoners, eased restrictions on the press and freedom of assembly and brokered cease-fires with many of the nation's ethnic insurgencies. After years of house arrest, opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been elected to the parliament, which is playing an active role in the country's governance.

At the same time, observers note that the pace and future of reforms are uncertain, and the country must contend with a shortage of social capital and trust, as well as a resurgence of ethnic conflict. In considering international educational partnerships, the contextual issues outlined below must be taken into account.

Political Context

Myanmar is simultaneously undergoing democratization and internationalization, and the rapid pace of change poses a considerable potential for destabilization from either of these processes. The overall climate is highly politicized. Any international entity seeking to engage in Myanmar must recognize that the very act of engagement with local partners may entail an element of "taking sides."

Domestically, there is the risk of factionalization, as various opposition groups vie for attention and power, and tend to represent relatively narrowly defined interest groups. Aung San Suu Kyi still has substantial symbolic power, but it is not entirely clear whether she will really be able to hold her own as a politician. While she has strong national recognition, she and the leadership of her party —the National League for Democracy—are perceived by some to be too isolated and not inclusive enough. The NLD also appears to some to be dominated by an older generation of leaders that may not represent the diverse population. While the military is withdrawing from the day-to-day governance of the country, there is still some ongoing competition for power between hard- and soft-liners. Nationwide, it is not clear yet how deep and sustainable the support is for continued reform and decentralization.

Beyond party politics, there are tensions between those who stayed in Myanmar and successive waves of exiles who are now returning from abroad. These potentially growing tensions contribute to competition for mindshare and institutional development resources among various research and civil society organizations.

Lack of Social Capital
The recent loosening of central control has underlined the reality that Myanmar is a multi-ethnic society and continues to face considerable ethnic conflict, particularly in border regions. Some international organizations fear the unrest could grow if the government's emergency response is too slow, or if the new government and opposition cannot join together to respond to the violence in an effective manner based on justice and accountability.

The President and a small team of advisors appear to be the primary drivers of reform and decentralization with support from a mix of grassroots activists, exile communities and recent returnees. There is, however, limited institutional capacity or bureaucratic buy-in as yet. There is little trust and confidence in existing institutions, including universities, which are perceived to be weak and too dependent on central government direction.

Interestingly, media reform appears to be progressing at a very steady pace. Universities will need to build confidence among in-country constituents and with potential international partners to demonstrate that they are capable and empowered to enter into and fulfill the terms of any agreements.

Lack of Capacity to Build International Ties
After decades of relative isolation, the country has a long way to go to build the framework to develop international ties. This is an important priority for higher education in particular, but it is also important at many levels in government and civil society. In 2014, Myanmar is expected to assume the presidency of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), but has very limited capacity and engagement to support this task. There is some risk that Myanmar could become a proxy site for competition between regional powers, specifically Japan and China. In addition, Myanmar historically has maintained a relationship with North Korea that complicates its global position.

International organizations seeking to engage in Myanmar have faced lengthy registration procedures, often over years, and many find themselves relegated to extended commuting from base operations in other countries or leading a somewhat tenuous existence in Myanmar, relying on short term business or tourist visas, or some forms of local registration.

There is little to no infrastructure in place to support international academic partnerships. Beyond the challenges posed by an overly centralized educational system, most universities do not have independent administrative units to manage international exchanges or research. (IIE is currently working to develop a training program that would build the capacity of university staff to develop or expand such units. See page 28 to learn more). Although international relations departments continued to exist throughout the military regime, there has been little international “field” work or exchanges. Foreign academics have had a difficult time gaining access to visiting appointments or research opportunities in Myanmar (only the University of Foreign Languages has any foreign students, and only a small handful of foreign faculty have been able to spend any extensive time in country). Myanmar experts in international relations have been relegated mostly to desk and archival research, in part due to legal barriers but also

for budgetary reasons. As one academic explained, "we only do cost-effective research" [in international relations].

Centralization/Decentralization of Bureaucracy & Higher Education

Ministry	# of HEIs*
Education	64
Health	15
Science & Technology	61
Defense	5
Culture	2
Forestry	1
Agriculture	1
Livestock/Breeding	1
Cooperatives	5
Civil Service	1
Religious Affairs	1
Border Affairs	2
Transportation	2
TOTAL	161

*As of 2011

Myanmar currently must contend with a dual challenge of excessive centralization and the processes of decentralization that is currently underway – particularly in the education sector. At the present time, 13 different ministries oversee higher education, the Ministry of Education overseeing the majority. The Ministry has 10 different departments for overseeing the country's education system, but for higher education it has two specific units, one for northern Myanmar – centered in Mandalay and one for southern Myanmar – operating out of Yangon.

While the system may seem highly centralized, it also is quite fragmented insofar as there are 12 other ministries that oversee and operate universities; each of these universities has a dedicated and strictly regulated curriculum that is more focused on a specific functional or technical expertise and less focused on providing a general liberal arts education. Indeed, some disciplines or techniques are completely absent (e.g. political science) or very underdeveloped (e.g. journalism studies, sociology, and social science methodologies). The universities in the fields of defense, forestry, and agriculture tend to be better staffed, equipped and funded than most other universities.

State	# of HEIs
Kachin	9
Kayah	3
Kayin	4
Chin	3
Sagaing	14
Tanintheryi	7
Bago	9
Magway	11
Mandalay	36
Mon	4
Rakhine	5
Yangon	33
Shan	14
Ayewarwaddy	12

The geographic distribution of these universities reflects considerations of equity and access rather than the availability of infrastructure, faculty, etc. In addition, many universities have been scattered across the country to constrain large scale student mobilization and participation in political demonstrations against the government. Interestingly, each of the major states in Myanmar has at least three universities within its locality. This leads to further fragmentation as the cost of operating these various units is fairly high and the

availability of adequate resources is very limited. As a result, many universities suffer from inadequate budgets as well as a shortage of qualified faculty and administrative personnel. The distribution of universities can be seen in the table on page 14.

Students, faculty and universities themselves suffer from a lack of autonomy and choice. All decisions regarding a student's choice of field of study or university are derived from performance on the national achievement test, administered upon completion of secondary school and depending on geographic location. Similarly, as noted above, access to international fellowships and exchange opportunities have been strictly regulated from the central ministries.

It seems that the capacity in the country to absorb training and new approaches to education and research may be limited at this time. This is due in part to the highly centralized, top-down nature of the educational system but also due to a certain amount of "assessment and training fatigue" created by the intense interest in Myanmar from outsiders. There is little coordination among foreign assistance, although there is some effort to become more coherent through various coordinating bodies organizing international donors and NGOs.

There currently are no private universities, although some schools – such as the Myanmar Institute of Theology – have been able to register with local authorities as "training schools." A law is currently under consideration to allow the establishment of private institutions with degree granting authority. This seems to be intended primarily for foreign entities wishing to establish a base in Myanmar, and will likely include minimal financial investment pre-requisites.

Basic infrastructure – from electric power, to internet access, to educational research and learning facilities – is uneven and undependable. We can expect significant improvements in online access within the next 12-24 months through foreign investment, but at this time access to international resources and information is very limited.

Educational Context

While functional literacy is relatively high for a country of Myanmar's development level, standards of education – particularly higher education – lag behind international standards, including ASEAN's standards. A Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR) is currently underway to help inform Myanmar educational policy reform. Several laws to reform education are currently under discussion in the Parliament, but will unlikely to be ready for implementation until later in 2013 or 2014.

Education is valued highly in Myanmar– in fact it is on par with national security and national identity concerns. As a consequence, the field may be more resistant to outside influences, and efforts to change higher education could be taken as "threatening." Thus many universities were shut down or significantly diminished in size by limiting access only to graduate students (mostly at the MA level) during the military regime and are only gradually rebuilding now, with very small cohorts of undergraduate "honors" students.

There is some risk that education could potentially be a lower priority area for reform and investment than some other areas of activity. The lack of investment in some areas is evident in poorly maintained physical plants, the poor condition of libraries and laboratory facilities, and limited pedagogic innovation. Teaching in most classrooms is dominated by "call and response" styles, with very limited interaction between students and faculty. Few faculty have terminal degrees.

There is an overabundance of low-level training and a dearth of high-quality education. To compensate for the lack of formal post-secondary educational opportunities at the undergraduate and graduate level, many people from Myanmar have resorted to informal training and certificates. As one student, who has completed 14 certificates, noted, however, the training offered tends to be overly general, superficial and ad hoc, provided through a number of non-governmental organizations as well as international organizations. Myanmar Egress, one of the biggest civil society organizations, has established its own training and capacity development center offering short courses throughout the country.

There have been little or no standards of accreditation or accountability, i.e. performance measures or assessments. Because of the emphasis on testing, there is little enforcement of class attendance and participation. For example, we heard of instances of students paying others to attend class for the minimum 10 days per term required or taking exams for them. A number of universities are seeking to address this in the course of applying for admission into the ASEAN network of universities.

Importance of Leadership and Entrepreneurship

Despite the challenges of centralization and bureaucratic rigidity noted above, Myanmar's civil society and educational sectors also highlight the importance of individual leadership, personality and entrepreneurship. Ministries and universities exhibit considerable variation in the degree of openness to change and internationalization. In part this appears to be determined by the relative willingness and ability of the rectorate or senior ministry leadership to lead and implement reforms. In general, there is an interest in reform and greater international connections, driven in part by a desire to reclaim the historical high standing of Myanmar's educational system in the region. A hunger for external information and technical support is evident everywhere and at all levels of institutional and civil society hierarchies.

As stated in this section, in its current state, Myanmar has a host of challenges that need to be addressed in order to ensure its success as it emerges from isolation. The next section will go into further detail about the most critical and current needs in Myanmar higher education.

II. NEEDS IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Contributing Author: Denis Simon, Vice Provost for International Strategic Initiatives, Arizona State University

The needs of higher education in Myanmar are extensive. The entire system requires nothing less than a complete renovation – from the physical infrastructure to the academic curriculum. Due to the nature of the political environment over the last two-plus decades and its deleterious impact on the education system, universities in Myanmar lack the intellectual vitality and scholarly vibrancy so often associated with Western education institutions and most of their Asian counterparts. It is hard to imagine that Myanmar's higher education system once stood out as one of the exemplars across the entire Asian region.

Today, however, modernizing the higher education system in Myanmar will require more than just upgrading buildings, classrooms, and related physical infrastructure. The more pressing need is to re-establish across the spectrum of higher education organizations a new type of totally integrated living-learning academic experience that generates fertile discourse and critical academic engagement outside as well as inside the typical academic classroom.

The state of Myanmar's higher education system was captured succinctly in a recent background paper by the U.S. Agency for International Development that was issued in November 2012:

> "While higher education structures and systems are in place, the state of higher education in Myanmar is dire. Decades of Military rule and chronic deficiency of investment in higher education have left the country with insufficient human and institutional capacity to provide quality and relevant higher education services to its citizens and communities. Additionally, the higher education system is burdened by a cumbersome administrative structure, high costs of higher education administration, and inadequate teaching capacity. These are some of the challenges calling for a systematic investment and reform of the higher education system in Myanmar."[2]

The IIE delegation of U.S. universities saw no inconsistencies from the above perspective with what we experienced on the ground during an intensive, week-long visit to a broad array of Myanmar universities and in meetings with various officials across the higher education system in different parts of the country. While there is a very high level of enthusiasm and energy for addressing Myanmar's pressing needs in higher education among university administrators,

[2] USAID-Myanmar-SOL-486-13-000012, "Higher Education Partnerships to Support the U.S.-Myanmar Commitment to Democracy, Peace and Prosperity," November 26, 2012, p.4.

faculty and students, the challenges, at present, greatly exceed the capacity of the political and economic system to respond effectively.

In addition, even though there is strong evidence of a willingness to engage with foreign universities and related institutions to exchange faculty and bring a variety of new academic ideas into the existing university environment, the fact remains that the huge variety of serious problems facing Myanmar's higher education system will require a concerted effort over many years to support and nurture the type of comprehensive recovery that is so badly needed.

Making this effort even more difficult is the fact that higher education reform, while clearly a designated priority by the current Myanmar leadership, stands among a wide range of other pressing needs that are all competing for scarce resources. As a recent report by the Asia Society said, Myanmar's ministers are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of policy and legislative changes being heaped on them, and the lack of the organizational capacity to take on the full breadth of the challenges facing the higher education system as well as the overall Myanmar economy.[3]

Still, it appears that there may be some light at the end of the tunnel. The Myanmar government, under the leadership of President Thein Sein, has stated its firm intention to make the entire education system a national priority. One of the many drivers behind the elevation of the education issue is the recognition of the important role of human capital to the economic development goals of the country. The absence of a strong base of human talent, especially higher end scientific, engineering and managerial resources, is acknowledged to be one of the most important factors constraining Myanmar's economic growth and technological development now and well into the future.

The talent problem on the output side, however, owes its existence to a range of serious deficiencies inside the university sector—foremost among them is the sad state of faculty resources in terms of both teaching and research; a similar gap exists in terms of support staff as well. As one senior administrator commented, "there are chemistry faculty who have not conducted an experiment with proper laboratory facilities and mechanical engineering professors who have yet to handle hands-on equipment."

The present government, however, has launched what appears to be a remarkably frank and comprehensive review and assessment of higher education—policy, legislation, quality and access—as part of a larger overall review of the country's education system. Various international experts have been invited to render assistance. For example, the Asian Development Bank and USAID have offered to support initiatives to address reform and revitalization of higher education. In addition, the government budget for education has been increased appreciably from 266,906 million kyat last year, to 310,020 million in 2013. While this only accounts for 1.3% of GDP and stands comparatively low when contrasted with most other ASEAN nations in the region, the leadership's willingness to provide more funds to support

[3] Asia Society, "Advancing Myanmar's Transition: A Way Forward for U.S. Policy," New York, February 16, 2012.

education does represent a significantly more enlightened perspective than what existed under the two-plus decades of military rule.

The following constitutes some of the explicit needs that our group identified during site visits, conversations, and exchanges during the course of our meetings in early March 2013.

Physical Infrastructure

Having visited a total of nine universities across three key locations in Myanmar, it quickly became very clear that the physical infrastructure inside most institutions is in serious need of repair. Most buildings are seriously outdated and in need of substantial upgrading, if not total replacement. Some of the laboratories and science-related buildings we visited had equipment that was reminiscent of U.S. high school labs in the 1960s and 1970s. The ability to approach state-of-the-art thinking in key fields such as biology, chemistry and physics continues to be seriously limited without a major updating of equipment and related facilities.

In addition, the majority of the campuses we visited lacked dormitory space to house students. To achieve the type of integrated living-learning experience typical of most modern universities, new facilities will have to be erected as a way to bring students on campus for a "total educational experience" that bridges academics with social engagement and networking. This is especially true in the case of Yangon University, which was once considered to be one of the jewels of higher education in the Asian region. The shuttering of undergraduate education and the movement of these students to locations outside the city has continued to be a major blow to the energy and vibrancy of this strategically important university. There clearly needs to be adequate facilities established to bring the undergraduate population back to the main campus and restore their role as an integral component of university life.

One other area that requires revitalization and upgrading are university libraries; most lack access to the world of electronic databases and digital publications. The majority of libraries do not have adequate funds for subscribing to the most important journals and magazines. And the books, textbooks, and other publications that already are in hand have been updated three or four times since the 1980s in most university libraries abroad. The modernization of library facilities is badly needed to encourage students and faculty to view their university libraries as reservoirs of new, relevant information, data, etc.

Curriculum

Like the physical infrastructure, most of the curriculum being offered inside Myanmar's universities is seriously outdated. Faculty lack access to the newest books and journals with which to educate themselves, as well as to update their teaching materials. The problems with obsolete curricula materials, however, are over-shadowed by the continued emphasis on rote learning and persistent high dependence on curricula content and direction derived, in most cases, from a central authority in the government. Simply stated, Myanmar's education system, especially at the tertiary level, needs to educate students who are much more capable of critical thinking and innovation. Faculty need to be unencumbered to teach more than an assigned curriculum.

Within the curricula area, there is a need for greater emphasis on English language training, including improving the quality of instruction as well as expanded access for more students to attend high quality English language courses. More native speakers need to be brought in to ensure that the level of instruction can be upgraded in general. Another direction for curricula development and upgrading includes training that would prepare people for public service and government jobs. Key areas of need include law, public administration, and international relations; the last area is particularly important as Myanmar steps up its involvement in ASEAN, in the Asian region, and in international affairs in general.

Training people capable of working across borders and cultures, internally and externally, is a critical area because of the current dearth of experienced Myanmar professionals. Political studies, which were frequently a restricted or controlled field of study by the military dictatorship, have now reappeared with new programs at Myanmar Egress and NLD's Bayda Institute. Other fields that also require attention in terms of new content and degrees include journalism, disaster prevention, environment studies, and conflict prevention and resolution.

It also is quite clear that there is a strong need for revamping the curriculum for training qualified scientists and engineers. Some of this effort will require updating curriculum to be consistent with major accreditation bodies such as ABET. The reason for adherence to such international standards is to ensure an ample supply of talent to enable Myanmar gradually but steadily to attract higher value-added foreign investment into the country over time. In the field of science—biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics, etc., there is a very apparent need to bring modern curriculum into the academic setting and to match those changes in curriculum with improvements in the quality of equipment for carrying out student experiments, testing, etc.

Administration

As described previously, Myanmar higher education administration is currently encumbered by its highly centralized and rigid structure. To address the inefficiencies endemic of such a configuration, there needs to be some degree of consolidation put in place to support fewer universities but to ensure that among those universities that remain, there is adequate funding and support to ensure a high quality education experience for students.

In fact, the appropriate structure for organizing and managing higher education in Myanmar is an issue already under discussion and was being debated during the time the IIE delegation was in the country. One dimension of the re-organization involves a greater degree of decentralization that would place more authority in the hands of university leaders, their deans and the faculty to orchestrate whatever changes are needed to modernize each of the respective universities.

This would go a long way towards reducing undesired government interference and helping to de-politicize the universities as potential targets during various shifts in the political environment. Under such a decentralization plan, the responsible Ministry would be more concerned with quality and funding issues, rather than control over program /content. In

addition, there also is a huge need for putting in place better metrics and assessment mechanisms such as accreditation systems to assess quality across various disciplines and programs. More and better academic data also are needed to support decision-making at the university and policy levels. Moreover, links with external accreditation bodies will need to be strengthened to ensure changes and improvements are consistent with international standards and practices. This will help make it easier for Myanmar's higher education institutions to cooperate and collaborate with foreign partners in terms of joint or dual degree programs, transfer credits, etc.

Faculty

As noted, there is a tremendous need for upgrading the quality of faculty inside Myanmar's universities. Many existing faculty do not have post-graduate degrees and among those that hold such degrees from Myanmar universities, serious questions remain about the quality of the training that was received, especially over the last 20 years or so. Faculty exchange programs are needed to familiarize Myanmar's university faculty with the modern academic environment that exists in the bulk of universities in the United States, Europe, Japan, and Southeast Asia.

Teacher training is another important area for faculty development; without an adequate capability to train teachers for K-12 education, the pipeline for feeding qualified, well-prepared students into the country's university system will be relatively sparse. The research side of faculty life in the university also is an important area that requires additional attention. Many faculty do not have experience preparing proposals for peer review competition, managing research projects, or engaging in international collaborative research.

One of the hallmarks of higher education in the West is the close connection between research and teaching; bringing the latest research into the classroom setting helps to ensure that students are aware of and exposed to state of the art thinking and concepts in their fields of particular interest. Unless remedied, the absence of a research-active faculty in many Myanmar universities, especially a research faculty that is plugged into the increasingly globalizing world of new knowledge creation and development, will prove to be a significant constraint on the modernization and enhancement of higher education across the country.

Information Technology

In the globalized, information intensive world of the 21st century, it has become commonplace for many students across the United States, Europe and East Asia to have multiple instruments and platforms to connect to the world of the internet and worldwide web. Access to a broad pool of information sources within and outside the university library has been an important tool for the education of the world's future global citizens. Internet linked and networked computers are an integral part of university life and learning these days in most high quality universities.

The poor state of the internet and the country's overall IT and telecommunications infrastructure in Myanmar is not only a constraint on the country's economy, but also has a

persistent negative effect on the efforts to modernize Myanmar's universities and enhance the learning experience of students across the entire spectrum of the education system. Therefore, it is essential that a serious effort be made to expand and upgrade the necessary components of the country's ICT (information and communications technology) infrastructure that would allow improved and broader access to the internet. The lack of high-speed internet connectivity is no longer simply a nice thing to have or covet; rather, it has become a major building block in the modernization of the traditional university across the globe. While there clearly has been some improvement in the last few years with internet access, this remains one of the areas of greatest impact in terms of the existing limits on educational development in Myanmar.

One area where the limits of internet access seem to have a particularly deleterious effect is online education. Online education promises to be an important growth area for training now and in the future of Myanmar. A strong, reliable broadband capability will be required to ensure consistent, high quality delivery of courses across the entire geography of the country. Training for creating, organizing and delivering online courses also needs to be implemented as well.

International Engagement

For several decades now, most of Myanmar's universities have been isolated from the mainstream of developments in the field of higher education around the world. The nature of higher education has evolved and fine-tuned in a continuous fashion while most of Myanmar's universities have stood on the sidelines due to internal political controls and restrictions. With the launch of the new reforms in higher education, Myanmar's universities have a chance to re-join the global community of universities, sharing knowledge and experiences to ensure further improvements in their ability to deliver a high quality education for Myanmar students.

How to embark on the multiple emerging opportunities for global engagement, however, can be daunting task as our delegation discovered during its weeklong visit. There is a huge danger that a "fire-hose" approach that offers too many opportunities to too many universities without an adequate infrastructure to manage, communicate and execute could generate an array of new problems as well as a high degree of disenchantment and disappointment.

Accordingly, Myanmar universities should prioritize developing ties that will provide training and knowledge to prepare a cadre of professionals for leading and managing regional and global engagements. Both universities and ministries will need to develop international offices with staff equipped to help develop partnerships, host international delegations, develop effective MOUs, support research cooperation, and send their students abroad. In response to this need, IIE is leading an effort to train university staff on how to run an international relations section on campus. For more on this initiative, see page 28.

At the same time, it also is important for Myanmar's universities to overcome their years of isolation by developing new programs and coursework on campus to educate students in ways that will significantly increase and expand their global awareness and understanding. Based on our visits to several campuses, there is a huge hunger for such exposure and access to such knowledge. It also will be important for Myanmar's universities to build up an infrastructure to

welcome and house visiting faculty and students from abroad. One of the lessons that Myanmar may learn from China as well as from its own counterpart universities in the ASEAN countries is that creating a hospitable environment for foreign visitors from advanced countries is a good way to attract such academic visitors and to sustain on-going cooperative linkages in the future. The tangible as well as expanded presence of foreign faculty and students on the campuses of Myanmar's universities will ensure that Myanmar students have multiple chances for engaging with those from other cultures and backgrounds.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS AND EXCHANGES

Contributing Author: Chris McCord, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences, Northern Illinois University

As the discussion on the needs of Myanmar higher education indicates, after decades of neglect and under-funding, the needs of the Myanmar universities are extensive and systemic. Both the physical and human infrastructures will need considerable development to regain the status that Myanmar higher education once enjoyed. Even with significant investment, we should not expect development to come quickly or easily, and should be prepared for setbacks and detours on the way. Given the reality that neither Myanmar nor the United States is positioned to make massive investments, our expectations for change to Myanmar higher education need to be even more modest. Great patience is going to be needed on all sides, and expectations on both sides for immediate outcomes should remain low.

There are advantages to that, however. The situation that the delegation observed at Myanmar universities suggests that even small changes can bring value to their institutions. Small-scale interactions will help to not only address a number of immediate needs, but will help create the partnerships that can lay the groundwork for larger engagements. Those small-scale interactions will also serve to test a system that has not been accustomed to interactions of any kind, and help to identify basic structural and policy changes that need to occur before more substantive engagements can be undertaken.

The following recommendations focus on these short- to mid-term goals for U.S. - Myanmar partnership building, and include:

1. Expand Person-to-Person Networks
2. Help Inform the Vision of Myanmar Higher Education
3. Assist in Infrastructure Development
4. Enhance English Language Capacity
5. Leverage Resources

Expand Person-to-Person Networks
Partnerships are fundamentally about people. To build relationships between higher education in the United States and Myanmar, it will be necessary to engage in exchanges that connect the faculty and staff of Myanmar universities to their colleagues in U.S. institutions. At the universities we visited, we heard great eagerness for visitors from U.S. universities, for durations anywhere from two weeks to a year.

Faculty exchanges can bring value in many different areas. To enable these essential first-steps towards partnership-building, we believe that two key issues must be addressed: local autonomy for organizing exchanges; and funding to support those exchanges.

- **Universities in Myanmar should be given more autonomy to invite and host visitors.** The current system of ministerial approval for visitors is one example of a highly

centralized system that must be relaxed if real change is to come to Myanmar. Relaxing ministerial control over faculty exchanges, particularly over visits to Myanmar universities from U.S. faculty, would be one small step in an important direction. As a valuable first step in encouraging a reduction in ministerial control, we recommend that IIE enter into a framework agreement with the Government of Myanmar on behalf of all of our universities. [This agreement is currently under review by the Government of Myanmar.]

- **Funding for faculty exchanges will be critical.** The costs of faculty exchanges need not be great, so comparatively small investments can have a large impact. We strongly endorse the U.S. Department of State's expansion of the Fulbright programs for Myanmar, and recommend that other third party sources consider faculty and staff exchange programs.

Help Inform the Vision of Myanmar Higher Education

Given the limited resources that will probably be available, we recommend that U.S. universities, Myanmar universities and funding sources give careful consideration to the types of faculty and staff exchanges that they wish to promote. There are opportunities to address nearly every aspect of Myanmar higher education, but not all of those opportunities will bring equal value to the system at this point. For example, in many disciplines, it appears premature to enter into advanced research collaborations.

Instead, we recommend efforts that will help build understanding and awareness among the Myanmar higher education community of what options for change or growth might be, and what near-term steps they might take to begin the change process. Myanmar higher education has been sufficiently isolated, and faculty and staff have been so constrained in their choices, that we believe it would be of value for them to have the opportunity to learn about the options available to them for reform. This includes exchanges that address options for:

- Curriculum
- Pedagogy
- Administration
- Basic Research Methods

At the same time, there are many needs in Myanmar universities that may not need research-active faculty to advance: basic research methods (i.e. not necessarily cutting-edge research techniques); curriculum development; exposure to organizational/structural issues. It is quite possible that faculty who are less research-active may be able to bring value in such areas, and have schedules that are more conducive to such exchanges. In the same vein, emeriti may also be well-positioned to address these issues, may have even more flexible schedules, and may be more willing to come to Southeast Asia on a voluntary basis. At an early stage of development, when Myanmar STEM disciplines are evolving, efforts to target such individuals may be more productive than efforts to recruit high-level research faculty.

Assist in Infrastructure Development

After decades of being under-resourced and tightly controlled, universities in Myanmar have a wide range of resource needs. We recognize that some of these, such as reliable power and broadband internet connectivity, are major infrastructure issues for all of Myanmar society, not just for higher education, and as such can only be addressed by high-level government commitments. Nonetheless, we would be remiss if we did not take note of them, and recommend attention to them.

Of the many infrastructure issues that are specific to universities, two stood out for us: libraries and science facilities.

A. Libraries

Libraries in Myanmar have been deprived of the books and materials that made up a twentieth century library, and of the technology that increasingly makes up a twenty-first century library. If reforms allow Myanmar university libraries to rebuild and reassert themselves, it will be valuable for their librarians to be aware of the opportunities for modern facilities, so that they do not needlessly invest limited time and resources in outdated models of library services. As an example of helping to inform the vision of Myanmar higher education, **we recommend a study tour from Myanmar librarians to the United States.** This study tour would allow librarians to visit multiple sites in the United States, spending a few weeks at each. Arizona State University, Northern Illinois University, Rutgers University and the University of Washington have volunteered to host such a study tour, provided funding can be identified for transportation and related costs.

B. Science Facilities

We learned of various efforts to create new laboratory facilities, such as the national laboratory in Yangon at the Myanmar Science & Technology Research Department compound, and the University Research Center at Mandalay University. To be successful, these facilities will need not only new equipment, but also basic support equipment and consumables; reliable power, cooling, etc.; technicians to operate the equipment; facilities for sample preparation and storage; storage and disposal of hazardous materials; mechanisms for maintenance, repairs and upgrades; etc. Without all of these ancillary supports, the facilities will quickly degrade and will provide little or no return on the investment made in creating them. We did not have an opportunity to assess whether or not all of these support mechanisms are in place, or if there is an understanding of these needs and how they will be met. If the issue has not already been addressed, then it will be an important foundational step for growing science & technology in Myanmar to do so.

As a preliminary step, **we recommend a site visit to Myanmar by one or more experts from U.S. universities, to make an assessment of the status of the new laboratory facilities and the plans for their use and maintenance.** This should involve the Ministry of Science and Technology, as well as the leading science and technical universities. The outcomes of that assessment will indicate what next steps might be, but a possibility would be a study tour

that would bring a group of technicians, scientists and engineers from Myanmar to the U.S. universities.

C. Collecting and Shipping Basic Materials

At most of the universities we visited, we observed the need for the most basic of instructional and research resources. **We recommend a consortium effort within U.S. higher education to identify, collect and ship to Myanmar surplus or retired materials that can be of value to Myanmar universities.** Such materials might include books (particularly textbooks that can be provided to faculty), basic laboratory equipment, instructional materials, computer equipment, etc.

Enhance English Language Capacity

An important element of change will be to improve the capacity of the academic staff to teach effectively in English. In the long-term, this will rest on the commitment of the entire education system in Myanmar to developing English language capacity. However, in the short-term, there are a variety of steps that can be taken to improve the capacity of current faculty and staff:

- **Bring native English speakers to Myanmar universities.** Along with the other benefits of faculty and staff exchanges, the presence on Myanmar campuses of native English speakers with whom faculty and staff can practice their English is a start towards improving English language capacity.

- **Create intensive English-language programs in Myanmar for faculty and staff.** Short-term intensive English programs, particularly programs that focus on providing instruction in English, can provide the next level of engagement. Programs located in major cities such as Yangon and Mandalay can serve faculty and staff from multiple universities. We recommend that U.S. universities work towards the establishment of such programs, perhaps on a consortium basis, and that funding options should be explored with public or private sector sources.

- **Create and/or strengthen programs in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) within Myanmar universities.** In the long-run, a sustainable supply of English-language speakers in Myanmar universities requires a sustainable supply of English teachers, which will best be met by locally supplied EFL and TESOL instructors. We recommend that one of the goals for curriculum development within Myanmar universities should be the development of such programs, with curricular design executed in cooperation with US universities.

Leverage Resources

All of the actors interested in improving U.S.-Myanmar higher education partnerships have real limitations on the resources they can deploy. Nevertheless, higher education, NGOs, funding agencies and the private sector all have responsibilities in helping countries in transition with

reform and development, and the role of higher education in Myanmar cannot be overestimated. Moving forward, it will be important to have close coordination of resources and efforts, so as to gain maximum leverage from individual initiatives.

To provide the greatest possible benefit from those limited resources, they must be deployed with care, to avoid redundancy and maximize leveraging. Some recommendations for doing so are explored below.

Several universities on this trip have expressed an interest in developing a consortium to approach engagement with Myanmar higher education collectively rather than competitively. There is clear value in sharing resources to get maximum advantage of our limited resources. Beyond that, there are opportunities that a consortium will be able to leverage that our individual universities would not be able to. Concrete instances of consortial efforts include:

a. Collecting and transmitting to Myanmar various types of materials, such as library materials, computer equipment and laboratory equipment.

b. Creating a study tour for Myanmar university librarians. Arizona State University, Northern Illinois University, Rutgers University and the University of Washington have already indicated commitments to participating in this effort.

c. Creating a central repository for information relevant to engagement between U.S. and Myanmar higher education.

IIE International Relations Sections Training Program

One of the priorities articulated by each of the universities visited during the delegation was the need to strength their international relations sections ("IR Sections") in order to facilitate academic collaboration with institutions in the United States and other countries. To assist in this effort, IIE plans to lead a consortium of universities and private sector partners to develop a training program that would build the capacity of university and Ministry staff to develop or expand these IR Sections.

The Training Program would include the following elements:

- 30 - 40 hours of training delivered through a combination of computer-based exercises and workshops held by video conference or in person.
- Training topics would include: Best practices for managing international education offices; developing MoUs; hosting delegations; facilitating joint research and student exchanges; and other topics.
- Mentorship: Each representative who takes the course will be mentored by a representative of an international education office at a U.S. institution.
- Certification: Representatives who successfully complete the course will be issued a certificate of completion and will be eligible for future more intensive face-to-face visits and other forms of engagement.

The library study tour is one example of a valuable type of exchange program, bringing groups from Myanmar to the United States for a structured short-term learning experience. A variant of this is to offer short courses at U.S. universities that target the needs of Myanmar higher education. Some specific audiences for such visits are:

a. Rectors and senior university leadership for an overview of how U.S. higher education operates.

b. Administrative staff to learn about the functioning of U.S. universities at the operational level. A concrete example would be training for administrative staff that need to populate the "International Relations Sections" that we heard the director general call for. See sidebar for more information about this effort.

c. Technical staff in science and engineering to learn about operation and maintenance of scientific equipment, and about the organization of core user facilities.

d. There are any number of ways in which faculty/academic staff could benefit from short courses or study tours: research methods; curricular innovation; development of English language/translation capacity. Given the stated desire of the Ministry of Education to address economics, law, international relations and political science, short courses on social science research methods and/or curricular issues may be an early priority.

There are countless other ways in which individuals and entities across sectors could be of service to Myanmar as it rebuilds its higher education sector and further supports human capacity development. For instance, there is a great need for “top-up” programs for Myanmar faculty members to complete a Masters or Ph.D. degree abroad; a need for training in teaching specific skills, such as language translation and interpretation – especially in light of Myanmar’s upcoming leading role in ASEAN; upgrading e-learning tools and other learning software; training rectors and senior administrators in leadership development and strategic planning; and a host of other areas in need of resources and expertise. Leveraging resources and coordinating efforts will be crucial to providing assistance in the most efficient and effective way possible. To this end, the IAPP delegates shared their own individual initiatives with IIE and with each other to create the combined list of commitments on page 30.

Members of U.S. Higher Education Delegation Make Specific Commitments to Action

As immediate follow-up to the IIE delegation to Myanmar, members of the delegation announced concrete university-led initiatives which will benefit citizens, students and faculty from both countries. Announced at a press briefing at the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, the commitments include:

- Four American universities are committing to form a **consortium to assist university libraries** in this country: Northern Illinois University, Rutgers University, University of Washington, and Arizona State University.
- Arizona State, Rutgers, and Northern Illinois Universities have all agreed to **host librarians for up to a month** in order to support the development of academic libraries in local universities.
- Northern Illinois University will **fully fund four faculty members to travel to Myanmar** to give lectures in the coming year.
- Samford University agrees to **sponsor one technology specialist** from their faculty to come to Myanmar Institute of Theology to help them upgrade their technological capacity.
- Ball State University will **sponsor a political science faculty member to visit Myanmar** and give lectures on political science topics.
- Hawaii Pacific University will **sponsor up to five English teachers** from each semester to come to their campus for short-term and semester-long programs.
- American University will provide **two or more fellowships, funded by the Nippon Foundation, to students from Myanmar** to complete an online Master's Degree in International Affairs focused on Comparative and International Disability Policy (CIDP) in the ASEAN region. Most of the work will be conducted over the internet, with a two-week residency in Bangkok this August. The degree takes two years and each fellowship is valued at $60,000.
- Northern Arizona University will **host one faculty member from the English Department** of a local university for up to one month to introduce them to their university's intensive English language teaching program, curriculum design and to provide faculty mentorship.
- Rutgers University will **support a short-term visit by a humanities professor from a local university**. Rutgers will also financially **support faculty members from its faculties of health, pharmacy, and environmental sciences** to make short-term visits to give lectures at local universities.
- Arizona State University will **explore the establishment of a joint certificate** in the study of religions with Myanmar universities.
- **Two UMass Lowell professors will be providing training and lectures** starting this summer at the Myanmar Institute of Theology.

CONCLUSIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

This is a critical juncture for engaging with Myanmar. There will be a lot of demands placed on higher education to produce students capable of critical thinking and innovation, as well as an investment in infrastructure – internet, libraries, teaching and laboratory facilities – and the kind of applied research that will benefit students and industry alike.

Some investors predict that the country's gross domestic product will double in the next five years. It indeed shows signs of opening up to business and investment, and a number of multinational companies are poised to enter the market. Higher education has a critical role to play in developing talent to support this growth. Higher education organizations can be a catalyst in bringing funders together with educators and government entities to make sure that investment is made where it can do the most good in preparing the future workforce and supporting economic development.

However, international engagement with Myanmar carries with it a substantial series of challenges because of the apparent fragility of many of the changes that are taking place at this time. Enthusiasm for engagement, therefore, has to be accompanied by a hefty dose of both patience and perseverance. It was clear to the members of the IIE delegation that even in the midst of the renaissance-like atmosphere that seems to be prevailing at this time, it is important to proceed with appropriate cautions to ensure that the university sector is not overloaded with duplicative requests or projects that simply will never be carried out due to shortages of qualified staff or financial resources.

There is no doubt that the awakening that has taken place in Myanmar is a welcome sight for those who have watched from afar while Myanmar's universities deteriorated due to explicit neglect and political heavy-handedness. Nonetheless, while it remains quite clear that Myanmar's universities are embarking on a path that eventually will prove rewarding and yield promising results, they too must remain focused on bringing about high priority, critically needed incremental changes and proceed ahead at a moderate versus an accelerated pace to ensure continued political support for the current reforms taking place. It is incumbent on the international education community to respect the need for such a deliberate choice and to proceed ahead accordingly.

As the many well-meaning initiatives and critically-needed resources begin to take on momentum, coordinating efforts among and between all sectors will be the most crucial factor in ensuring that those who will benefit from all of the good intentions – the rectors, lecturers, students, and employees of today and tomorrow – will actually have their needs addressed. Organizations in all sectors that want to contribute to this exciting, historic transition should reflect on what is feasible and in line with their own mission, but consider how to align with other institutions' initiatives, capitalize on existing programs, and pool resources. In this way, the United States, and the international community at large, will be able to best serve the higher educational needs of the people of Myanmar and enjoy the fruits of international collaboration at its finest.

APPENDIX A

IIE Myanmar Higher Education Initiative: Delegation Agenda, Participants, and IAPP Advisory Board Members

AGENDA

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Opening Workshop

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25

Site visits to Yangon Technological University and Dagon University

Site Visit to Yangon University

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 26

Site visits to Yatanabon University and University of Medicine

Site visit to University of Mandalay

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 27

Roundtable with Myanmar Ministry Representatives in Naypyidaw

Networking Reception

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28

Individual visits to the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Science & Technology, and Ministry of Health

FRIDAY MARCH 1

Site Visit to Myanmar Institute of Theology

Site Visits to Yangon University of Foreign Languages and Yankin Teachers College

Final Debrief

End of Delegation

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IIE International Academic Partnership Program Advisory Board Members

A major component of the International Academic Partnership Program is the mentorship that each participating institution receives from a member of the Advisory Board. Mentors are responsible for providing comprehensive feedback to their mentee institutions on their strategic plan, and act as a sounding board throughout the program. Advisory Board members are selected based on a number of criteria, including their experience with the focus country, their experience in strategic planning, and their commitment to assisting other institutions to engage with the focus country. The IAPP Myanmar program is fortunate to have the following distinguished individuals on the 2012 – 2013 Advisory Board:

Priscilla Clapp
Retired Minister-Counselor, U.S. Foreign Service *and Senior Advisor*, Asia Society

Suzanne DiMaggio
Vice President, Global Policy Programs, Asia Society

Zachary Klim
Associate Director of Academic Initiatives and Global Programs, Steinhardt School of Education, Culture, and Human Development, New York University

Robert Rotberg
Fulbright Research Chair in Political Development, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University *and Founding Director of the Program on Intrastate Conflict (1999-2010), John F. Kennedy School of Government*, Harvard University

APPENDIX B
Resources and Opportunities for Engaging with Myanmar

FULBRIGHT PROGRAM

Sponsored by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the U.S.-Burma Fulbright Program was established in 1947 and is among the very first bilateral Fulbright programs worldwide with over 800 alumni from both countries. Today, the Fulbright program provides opportunities for Burmese citizens to study or conduct post-graduate academic research in the U.S., and for U.S. scholars and professionals to teach at Burmese institutions or to share policy expertise in the public sector.

- **The Fulbright Foreign Student Program** provides scholarships to Burmese citizens for U.S. graduate study and research in virtually all academic fields for one year or more.

- **Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship Program**: In 2013, the Fulbright Program is expanding opportunities for American scholars and young professionals to share their expertise with Burmese counterparts in the higher education and public sectors. In cooperation with the host government, the Fulbright Program will place a small number of American young professionals under the Fulbright Public Policy Fellowship Program in Burmese government ministries where they will gain hands-on public sector experience as special assistants to ministers in Burma, providing support and assisting in building capacity within the Government of Burma while promoting long-term ties and strengthening mutual understanding between U.S. and Burmese citizens. Burmese language proficiency is not required.

- **The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program** provides awards through an annual competition to approximately 1,200 U.S. scholars and professionals to lecture and/or conduct research at institutions in more than 125 countries in a wide variety of academic disciplines. Currently, U.S. faculty and professionals may apply to the Fulbright Specialist Program, a short-term component to the traditional Fulbright Scholar Program. Specialists serve as expert consultants on curriculum faculty development, institutional planning and related subjects at overseas academic institutions for a period of 2 to 6 weeks. Fields of interest for U.S. Scholars and Specialists include economics, education (higher education administration, curriculum design), journalism, law, international relations and American foreign policy, business, agriculture and STEM fields, and American literature.

- **The Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholar Initiative** is open to university faculty, foreign ministry and government officials, and professional staff of think tanks and other NGOs in ASEAN member nations – including Burma – to travel to the U.S. for scholarly and professional research for three to four months on issues that are relevant and useful to member nations, and central to the U.S - ASEAN relationship. Burmese participants for Fulbright awards are chosen through a competitive merit-based selection process managed at the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon.

Website: http://eca.state.gov/fulbright

Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, also sponsored by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, provides a year of academic study and professional development experiences in the United States designed to build long-term professional capacity in fields that are key to Burma's political, social, and economic development. This program is for young and midcareer professionals in fields that include public health and public administration.
Website: http://www.exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/hubert-hhumphrey-fellowship-program

Study of the U.S. Institutes

Study of the U.S. Institutes are five- to six-week academic programs focusing on topics in U.S. studies for groups of foreign undergraduates or foreign scholars. Hosted by universities and colleges throughout the United States, the Institutes include an intensive academic residency, an educational study tour to another region of the United States, and opportunities for participants to engage with American peers.
Website: http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/studyus-institutes

EducationUSA Advising

EducationUSA educational advising provides Burmese students and their families with accurate and comprehensive information about opportunities to study in the United States. Educational advisors counsel students in individual and group sessions in Rangoon, conduct outreach events in outlying cities, and host presentations by U.S.-based higher education institutions interested in reaching students in Burma. The EducationUSA program also manages the Opportunity Fund, which pays for up-front costs for financially disadvantaged Burmese students seeking to study in the United States. According to the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, 807 Burmese students studied in the United States in 2011-2012; with 29 U.S. students studying in Burma in 2010-2011.
Website: http://educationusa.state.gov/

E-Teacher Program

E-Teacher online courses improve the teaching skills of teachers of English in Burma by focusing on different skills sets, such as teaching critical thinking or working with young learners and teens.
Website: http://exchanges.state.gov/nonus/program/e-teacher-scholarshipprogram

Global Undergraduate Exchange Program

The Global Undergraduate Exchange program provides one-semester and one academic year scholarships to outstanding undergraduate students from non-elite, underrepresented sectors in society in Burma for non-degree undergraduate study at accredited U.S. two- and four-year institutions.
Website: http://www.exchanges.state.gov/nonus/program/global-undergraduate-exchangeprogram-global-ugrad

English Access Microscholarship Program

The English Access Microscholarship Program provides two years of highquality after-school English language classes plus other enrichment activities for youth from underserved communities in Burma. In Spring 2012, a group of outstanding Access alumni and Access teachers traveled to the United States for a three-week-long Educational and Cultural Programs.
Website: http://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/englishaccess-microscholarship-program

Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research – Science (PEER Science)

PEER Science is a competitive grants program that invites scientists in developing countries to apply for funds to support research and capacity-building activities on topics of importance to USAID and conducted in partnership with their NSF-funded collaborators.
Website: http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/dsc/peerscience/index.htm

Higher Education Partnerships

USAID is just completed the first round of a call for concept papers for higher education partnership activities, which needed to include at least one U.S. higher education institution, one Burmese higher education institution, and one private sector partner.
Website:http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=wtgqQSJKhQ8KpLBVZG0qyCQVGGTwYpd3KTn3Lh8H4pQLTwL6Xyvl!-578240590?oppId=208113&mode=VIEW

Burma Studies Group

The Burma Studies Group (BSG), a subcommittee of the Southeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies, provides a forum for students, scholars and researchers of Burma and Burma studies, broadly defined, and from any disciplinary perspective. Among other activities, the group maintains an active membership and dialogue through scholarly meetings, including the biennial International Burma Studies Conference, and maintains a website complete with online resources for scholars, students, and the community.
Website: http://www.burmastudiesgroup.org/index.php

Center for Burma Studies

The Center for Burma Studies is a non-political, non-degree granting, administrative and academic unit within Northern Illinois University, and the only Center of its kind in the United States. Its goals include: to maintain and expand a comprehensive research library to sustain the field of Burma Studies; the collection, care, and exhibition of the arts of Burma; the support and promotion of undergraduate and graduate teaching concerning Burma; and the securing of educational opportunities through scholarships, internships, and fellowships.
Website: http://www.burma.niu.edu/burma/index.shtml

About the Institute of International Education

The Institute of International Education, founded in 1919, is a world leader in the exchange of people and ideas. IIE has a network of 30 offices and representatives worldwide and 1,100 college and university members. In collaboration with governments, corporate and private foundations, and other sponsors, IIE designs and implements programs of study and training for students, educators, young professionals, and trainees from all sectors with funding from government and private sources. These programs include the Fulbright and Humphrey Fellowships and the Gilman Scholarships, administered for the U.S. Department of State, and the Boren Scholarships and Fellowships administered for the National Security Education Program. IIE's publications include the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, as well as *Funding for United States Study,* the *IIEPassport Study Abroad* print and online directories, and the StudyAbroadFunding.org website. **www.iie.org**

About IIE's Center for International Partnerships

The IIE Center for International Partnerships in Higher Education assists higher education institutions in developing and sustaining partnerships around the world. The Center engages in the following activities:

- Guiding colleges and universities through a customized partnership planning process to develop institutional strategies for fostering international partnerships.
- Conducting training activities focused on implementing and sustaining partnerships with higher education institutions in a focus country.
- Providing advice and liaison services through IIE's network of international offices and partners. Collecting and disseminating best practices in developing institutional linkages and programs.
- Convening conferences and symposia of international educators and other leaders in the field.
- Producing timely policy research papers on critical issues.
- Organizing U.S. study tours for higher education administrators and experts from around the world to enrich their understanding of U.S. higher education's diversity and bring them together with potential partners.

www.iie.org/cip

Recent IIE Briefing Papers

- U.S. Students in China: Meeting the Goals of the 100,000 Strong Initiative (2013)
- Expanding U.S. Study Abroad to Brazil: A Guide for Institutions (2012)
- Models for U.S. Study Abroad to Indonesia (2012)
- U.S. and Australian International Student Data Collection: Key Differences and Practices (2012)
- Learn by Doing: Expanding International Internships/Work Abroad Opportunities for U.S. STEM Students (2012)
- English-Taught Master's Programs in Europe: New Findings on Supply and Demand (2012)

www.iie.org/publications