CONCLUSIONS OF THE SWOT ANALYSIS OF UASVM CLUJ-NAPOCA

The strategy of the UASVM Cluj-Napoca for the period 2012-2016 is based on a realistic SWOT analysis. This approach takes into account the existing resources and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and the inevitable threats, as well as the annual updating underlying the operational plans, with an emphasis on minimizing the risks during the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

To this end, the information included in the institutional self-evaluation report allowed a detailed examination of the current situation and issues the UASVM Cluj-Napoca is facing, thus contributing to a better identification of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The SWOT analysis takes into account the important aspects of the activity of the University, namely:

1. The teaching / training resources at undergraduate, master, doctorate level
2. Research resources and performance.
3. Social, cultural and sports facilities for students
4. Resource management for quality assurance in the education, training and research process.

1. Strong points

1. UASVM Cluj-Napoca was accredited by the EUA and ARACIS being ISO-TUV certified, and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine is EAEVE accredited.
2. According to the national classification performed by MEN in 2011, UASVM Cluj-Napoca was included among the 12 universities of "advanced research and education."
3. The main study programs conducted in the University (Agronomy, Horticulture, Forestry, Forest Engineering, Animal Science, Biotechnology, Food Science and Technology and Veterinary Medicine) are included in category A in the national hierarchy of the study programs performed by the MEN in the year 2011.
4. By its study programs and research contracts the University is a regional leader in the field of academic education and research.
5. The University offers a variety of study programs included in the following branches of science: Agricultural and Forestry Sciences, Engineering Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, in various fields: Agronomy, Horticulture, Forestry, Biotechnology, Food Science and Technology, Animal Science, Environmental Science, Engineering and Management, Veterinary Medicine.
6. The University offers all levels of education (Bachelor - Master – PhD) for full-time education, and for certain bachelor and master programs distance and part-time learning is also provided.
7. For the bachelor and the master level, the University provides study programs in English and French.
8. The University encourages competitive management and performance at department level, as a result of decentralization and distribution of the budget based on the hierarchy of the study programs.
9. The research carried out in the university is nationally recognized, is transparent in the classification of the university among the top research universities, based on a large number of research contracts, ISI publications, infrastructure investment and involvement of young researchers, PhD students, post-docs, extended joint projects.
10. The University provides journals with national and international rank (ISI).
11. The University initiates University funded internal competitions for research grants addressed to young researchers.
12. UASVM Cluj-Napoca develops a quality assurance system for education and research and as incentives for the human resources. The general principles concerning quality in higher education take into account transparency, compatibility and convertibility. The Strategic Plan of UASVM Cluj-Napoca focuses on quality and continuous improvement.
13. The academic staff is dedicated to teaching and research activities, the teachers being competent and providing support to students through courses that meet the international standards, compatible with the European ones and developed through Erasmus programs.
14. The material resources, characterized by the existence of modern equipment for education and research, provide optimal conditions for teaching and practical training as pilot units and experimental stations and units (farms).
15. All students have access to library services, databases, Internet, accommodation in dormitories, social, sports facilities, a restaurant and a pub.

2. Weak points

1. Certain fields of study at doctoral level have no correspondence with the doctoral schools of the University.
2. Certain graduation and dissertation papers have only theoretical content, without focusing on research, case studies and practical work carried out by students.
3. Failure to apply the Act no.1/2011 on differentiated funding of the universities.
4. Lack of new competitions in the PN2 frame and the small number of European projects involving the University have a negative effect on research funding.
5. Few incoming Erasmus exchange students
6. Limited information on the labour market and graduates’ needs, a difficult involvement of the ALUMNI associations.
7. Flaws in the management and administrative services attitude: the need for training, "follow-up" procedure and quality assurance
8. Inappropriate policies of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development regarding the involvement of the agricultural universities in reorientation programs for the people in rural areas.

3. Opportunities

1. The university ranking in the first category at national level is a good preamble for additional funding of teaching and research.
2. Development of collaborative networks and partnerships with universities abroad
3. Accessing grants, specific for students’ practice
4. Collaboration with the business environment for possible technologic transfers, service provision, consulting.
5. The interest shown by young people from various countries within and without the European region to pursue the undergraduate and master programs organized by the University the international language??????.
6. Capitalization of the ORIZONT 2020 strategy in order to encourage and support the research programs of the University.
7. Allocation of significant financial support through the new Common Agricultural Policy in order to finance the agricultural innovation and knowledge transfer with respect to farms.
8. Developing new European programs of "Life Long Learning" and e-Platforme type.
9. Development of new national priority programs, such as those dedicated to improving human resources, the regional technological parks, competitiveness poles etc.
10. Developing the existing partnerships with public and private sector institutions, generating new funding sources.

4. Threats

1. The government funding for higher education and research is below the expected level and not in line with the UASVM Cluj-Napoca position in the national ranking performed by MEN.
2. Domestic and international competition for attracting students and the aggressive major European universities. The response of the university translates into ongoing efforts to increase the quality of the education and training offer, in launching new study programs as required by the labour market, in the development of research programs, all attractive and highly qualitative for human resource training.
3. The national legislation is still not highly encouraging to attract foreign students (non-EU). The national legislation also poses threats related to crisis measures that are very limiting in respect to new jobs in public institutions. Short-term measures to counteract this threat require the increase of the efficient use of the existing resources.
4. The downward demographic trend, with a negative impact on student number dynamics and the gradual increase in the cost of living, leading to a decline in the life standard and lack of interest of the high school graduates for academic studies.
5. The current economic context represented by a few medium and large businesses that can organize and support student internship may affect the training of future graduates who will not have a minimum of experience in their profession.

6. Significant reduction of national research funding in recent years, along with the increase of the standards for minimum eligibility criteria for attracting research grants at national level, for project managers;

7. Great difficulty in finding jobs in the country faced by the overqualified graduates of doctoral and post-doctoral programs.

8. Difficulties in introducing differentiated salaries based on performance, due to extremely rigid legal provisions in the field.

9. The downward trend in revenues from students (tuition fees) due to high dropout rate among students in the first year of study.

5. Conclusions

In its almost 145 years of history UASVM Cluj-Napoca has developed as an elite academic institution, both at regional and national level. After 1990, and particularly after Romania became an EU member state, major changes in higher education were adopted and therefore, UASVM Cluj-Napoca has adjusted its development strategy.

Bologna and Lisbon processes support the educational and research restructuring of the university, the increase of the quality and efficiency of all academic processes that is now understood as a continuous action, a necessary condition for international recognition and competitiveness.

The strategy of the university is formulated for a four-year period and the targets for the coming years have in view the excellence, the competitiveness and the integration in society, placing UASVM Cluj-Napoca as a university of advanced research and education under the Education Act No. 1/2011. The requirements of this act open up new opportunities for university restructuring, consolidating the existing strong points: in education, research, academic community and management. The reasons that underlie the decision to grant the University the status of the highest national quality ranking is supported by a set of results that individualize the University in Romania and that are in line with the developments in the EU benchmark universities.

The integrated education (at all levels) and the advanced research, are efficient in the usage of current resources and in development (human resources, infrastructure, documentation, etc.) and future developments take into account the fact that the lines of study in English and French can bring significant changes in the structure of the university, faculties and departments.

The integrated approach links the development of high-tech products (e.g.: sustainable energy), to environmental issues (conservation and use of natural resources), quality of life and the Education and Economic Development, all of the allowing complex approaches in major projects, where the research and technological development departments can be actively involved. The formation of specific structures to strengthen the
role of the university in promoting research and technology transfer excellence are considered.

The facilities offered to students in terms of education and accommodation provide new opportunities in the coming years, including an offer of horizontal skills training (entrepreneurship, teaching education).

The large number of projects conducted in the university for the development of the human resource further supports this trend and develops the knowledge and skills of our graduates. Strong involvement in the community and in the economic area of the region, the outcome of which being partnerships between UASVM Cluj-Napoca and the economic environment - considering the future development, according to the new act regarding the public-private partnerships.

Expanding cooperation with higher education institutions and research institutes in the EU for stronger international competitiveness.

A proactive management at all levels (education-research-administration) and in all departments and faculties, as a coherent development supporting a synergistic management decision and strategic actions.

Quality assurance represents a key element in improving university management through a continuous cycle of planning, execution, verification, and by assessing risks and reformulations of operational plans.

Periodically, UASVM Cluj reviews its university management system in order to oversee the weak points and take action, particularly in terms of the adaptation of study programs and recent pragmatic aspects of science and technology, student focused education based on more practical skills and improved competencies, taking into account the students’ views in what concerns the improvement of programs, of earning mutual confidence to improve the quality and accountability in the teacher - student relation.

The risks related to the changing in legislation, changes in the labour market and the performance of the local economy in the context of the current economic crisis can be minimized by a flexible management and a coherent strategy.

Given the strong and weak points of the current performance of the University, as well as the existing opportunities and risks, in our quality of competitive higher education institution of "advanced research and education", we believe that this self-assessment process, followed by external evaluation, is a necessary step to further improvements regarding the international competitiveness in the area of European higher education and research.