

**Fulbright New Century Scholars Cairo Meeting
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**Report presented by Working Group 1, “The Academic Profession in the Age of
Globalization” (Elizabeth Balbachevsky, Carol Colatrella, Manuel Gil-Antón, Reitu
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Gathering for a second time, following the initial meeting in Boston several months earlier, proved extremely useful to all team members. Through intensive discussions, the team members refined the conceptual framework to be used for the comparative study, reviewed features of each individual research design looking for areas in common so that a highly integrated joint study will emerge, and agreed on their future deliveries timetable.

The revised common outline for the study considers four parts: an understanding of the key parameters of the professoriate, the key linkages between globalization and higher education, the dominant features of the professoriate as affected by globalizing forces in higher education, and the areas of convergence and divergence in the current academic profession that might emerge in the six country case studies. Each of these four components underwent precise elaboration so that definitions, variables, and processes related to them will receive similar treatment by all the national case studies being planned. The team also reviewed items considered in the original data-gathering instruments. In view of the tentative hypotheses on governance evolving from the case studies, it was deemed advisable to expand the number of university administrators to be interviewed and to craft special questions for them. On the basis of country profiles developed so far, it could be seen that, while several common patterns are emerging among universities in the countries represented by team members, it is also certain that substantial differences may emerge in the cases of South Africa and Russia for their diverse historical circumstances. Our joint study was perceived by a fellow NCS researcher as being “too broad.” We think that the holistic nature of our study will give it strength and that we are capable of conducting the proposed study in the available time. Since some of our team’s work overlaps with the team working on the research university, David Baker from that team visited us to exchange views and explore the possibility of sharing drafts

Fieldwork by most team members will take place in May-July and this will be followed by an active write-up of their respective case studies. We agreed that a draft of the individual case studies would circulate among team members by the end of July and that our inputs for the cross-national comparison study would be available by the end of August so that the team coordinator will be able to draft a full synthesis of all findings by mid-September and a final document produced by early October.

The dialogue with Egyptian colleagues toward the end of our Cairo meeting provided extremely illuminating information about the condition of the public universities and academics in Egypt. It was surprising to detect a strong dichotomy between a rigid system of higher education with a centrally coordinated curriculum and concomitant regulations issued by the Minister of Higher Education on the one hand, and, on the other, the extremely autonomous behaviors that university professors enjoy since there seems to be no mechanism in place either to reward meritorious behavior or monitor regular performance. Our team had attracted no signatures by noontime, but by 2 p.m., we had the participation of seven very engaged Egyptian scholars. That our team’s name raised so little initial attention suggests that perhaps we should try another title for our study. The Egyptian colleagues gave us their e-mail addresses and requested to have copy of our studies.

Submitted by Nelly P. Stromquist, Team Coordinator