

Cross-Border Coffee Break: Futures at the Narxoz Business School

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1. How will you find collaborative research projects with other universities, and who will fund such collaborative research projects for your students?

I've been very fortunate over the number of years to build a variety of relationships with different universities. I also serve as a fellow for the executive education program at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. Initially, I will be using my international, but we are very much open to exploring new partnerships. Through organizations like GBSN, we are excited to explore new opportunities.

Finding funding is something that is a challenge for everyone. There are really interesting opportunities now to fund innovative, educational, and research-based projects and programs that are doing things differently. The funding landscape for futures studies and foresight is actually a bit better than maybe some other areas and disciplines. We're looking at a variety of organizations for funding. I've got a few proposals already out. We will be looking at working directly with organizations, like the World Bank, for example; but we are also pursuing different research grants by working with partners. We might find partners in Europe, for example, where there's large research funding for projects called "Horizon 2020," that are using these innovative approaches and challenging norms and assumptions around the future. Our hope is that through my international network, but also through the networks of our faculty and administration, we can initially provide seed funding for a variety of projects and programs. We also hope to make the Qazaq Futures Institute truly sustainable within a few years. We are very much open to working with different partners on a variety of even smaller scale projects that could lead to larger scale projects through organizations like GBSN, so I would love to explore any and all collaborations through this network.

2. Can you go into more detail about the types of tools and resources you will use to create an innovative learning environment at the Qazaq Futures Institute?

One of the things we're focusing on is how to use games and simulations in a variety of environments and contexts, not for just learning in the classroom. How can students take this and use this for a thesis project? How can they use this as a tool

or skill within their everyday business environment and use it as a skill for thinking differently about the future or changing the organization paradigm?

Many interesting studies have come out recently about the effectiveness and efficiency of the utility of games. What is it that they're good at? What are they not good at? We want to provide rigorous training and a theory-driven approach to using these methods and tools. The center and our work will focus on how we can bring and adapt these into different contexts. Gaming and simulations are an area that we would like to focus on, and we think that there is an opportunity for students to continue to use this in their work.

Another is to try to challenge ourselves to think about what online tools or digital spaces are available. We have seen social media completely transform the higher education landscape. It simply doesn't work now if a university doesn't have an Instagram page or Twitter feed. So, what is the next generation of social media and connection technologies going to be, and how can we prepare for them? In my past work I've had a chance to experiment with technologies like mobile augmented reality. We're seeing a variety of improvements in virtual reality as well, so how can we start thinking about using and integrating these technologies which are currently being used in lots of corporate environments for things like trainings, different kinds of events, and strategy or planning, and continue to be at the forefront of thinking about what the next generation of these technologies will be. How are they going to be further integrated with not just the operational environment, but also within the broader business landscape?

These are two examples of areas that we will have a chance to focus on. How can we consider more innovative approaches and tools and methods and what their application can be in, again, not just the operational environment, but specifically the business context?

3. What types of partnerships are you creating with organizations for the program?

There are different levels of partnerships. We have partners that we would pursue joint research with, and that research could be on a smaller scale project, on a semester basis or maybe a year-long project, for example. I currently have a proposal out for a collaborative project with the University of Korea, and that would be a multi-year project looking at what digitalization is going to do in a country in southeast Asia. This project is funded by an international agency. So again, there are different scales of projects. We might even have an MOU, where we might have a student exchange or faculty exchange. Because futures studies is so new within the region, we are open to a variety of partnerships at different scales or scopes that allow us to learn from different organizations, including those that have been successful using these approaches, but also those where these approaches are new, in order to exchange faculty and to exchange students to find

ways to spread futures. We think there's a rich opportunity to forge a variety of different levels and kinds of partnerships and we're open to pursuing different collaborations with partners around the world.

- 4. The context of futures goes back to the earlier idea of the incubator, where ideas are forward-looking strategy and space for incubating ideas is critical and crucial for learning and development.**

There is very much a connection between the idea of how you seed a new business venture, what is needed for entrepreneurship, and how these ideas incubate. There is a lot of connectivity in the overall education space about how futures can be used for innovation.