



Central Asia Outlook

An Update on Eurasia Foundation Programs:
Building Social Capital

Spring / Summer 2006

AES Corporation Establishes Leadership Learning Center

Marking the launch of a new Leadership Learning Center (LLC) in Ust-Kamenogorsk, representatives from **AES Corporation**, the Eurasia Foundation (EF), and the local Akimat held the opening ceremony at an AES-funded state-of-the-art classroom at the **Kazakh-American Free University KAFU** on February 17. The LLC, which provides high-level executive training courses to mid- and upper-level managers in East Kazakhstan, held its opening ceremony at the end of its third business management module for 20 executives from Ust-Kamenogorsk and other cities in the region.

EF set up the program with seed funding from AES Corporation, selecting professors from the **Kazakhstan Institute of Economics, Management and Strategic Research (KIMEP)** to customize and teach modules based on curriculum from the Darden School of Business Administration at the University of Virginia. With the help of KAFU faculty, KIMEP professors run these intensive week-long modules once per month, but the LLC hopes to expand course offerings and frequency this summer. "Companies throughout East Kazakhstan have a growing need for quality management training," says Dan Ballast, KAFU Vice President. "The initiative taken by AES has provided the resources and stimulus to set up a program that will really benefit companies in the region. Without the AES contribution, we would not have been able to get this program off the ground."

EF set out to establish the LLC last spring, with a two-year funding commitment from AES. EF ran a competition to identify the partner universities and then sent two KIMEP professors to the Darden School of Business Administration, the University of Virginia's top-tier MBA program. The professors participated in an intensive two-week leadership management course and consulted with Darden faculty to develop a similar module for Kazakhstan. After returning to Almaty, the professors

then customized the curriculum for local audiences and translated the materials into Russian. "The development of these modules is very intensive," says KIMEP professor Dilbar Gimranova. "The Darden program is quite sophisticated, but it is a challenge to bring a Kazakh context to the module, to give examples that local managers can relate to. We have worked very hard to deliver high quality courses, and I think our efforts are really paying off."

While KAFU hosts and administers the LLC in Ust-Kamenogorsk, KIMEP plays a crucial role in the program, providing its top business management professors to run the modules. In January, AES paid for professors Dilbar Gimranova and Alma Alpeissova to attend a second course at Darden. Gimranova and Alpeissova are now customizing a second module into Russian for managers in East Kazakhstan, which the LLC expects to roll out this summer. "We are very excited to help the LLC develop and run these modules," says Bob Robertson, Dean of the Bang College of Business at KIMEP. "Providing high-quality executive education using locally-relevant case studies is one of the most important educational services of KIMEP."

AES, a global power company, owns and manages power generation and distribution businesses throughout northern and eastern Kazakhstan, including one of the largest coal-fired power plants in the world, in Ekibastuz. With more than 6,500 local employees, AES has an enormous need for ongoing high quality executive training programs. "We used to run our own executive training program in Ust-Kamenogorsk," says AES Regional Manager Dale Perry, "but AES is not in the business of management training. We wanted to help set up a program that could provide cutting edge management training not only to our employees but also to other companies in the region. We are hoping that by helping to train managers in other companies, the LLC will help lift the productivity of the whole region."

The LLC will eventually wean itself of dependence on AES and EF funding support. "This program is the only one of its kind in the whole region," says Julia Sagindikova, who runs the LLC. "A number of corporations and small businesses have expressed an interest in attending modules, and we are just now forming an advisory board of local business representatives to help us identify new training needs. We expect the LLC to become self-sustaining within the next two years."