

Dean's Report 2009

This year, pride in our university has certainly gone up a few notches with SUT becomes one of the National Research Universities. Of course, the main contribution for the articles, reviews and proceedings came from our institute making the application for the NRU successful.

We were working furiously to submit proposals in trying to get funding from the government's stimulus package 2 at the beginning of July. Then at the end of July, three of our faculties, Prof.Dr.Kritsana Sagarik, Assoc.Prof.Dr. Anan Tongraar and Assist.Prof.Dr.Visit Vao-soongnern, were working through the weekend in order to finish an application to secure a place for SUT in the NRU. Although we heard quite some turbulent about this government project and haven't received any money, it has certainly helped to promote SUT quite loudly for being in the league. The NRU project somewhat helped to speed up the launch of SUT post doctoral and Ph.D. scholarship programs which have already been implemented recently. This will help our institute improve research opportunities for our students and faculty.

At graduate level, we had another good year. Twenty six students were awarded the Ph.D., and thirteen were awarded the M.Sc. degrees this year, although only 19 Ph.D. and 10 M.Sc. students were able to join in the commencement ceremony on 14 October. At present, we have the total number of 266 graduate students including 186 Ph.D. and 80 M.Sc. candidates, who are studying with us.

There were quite some activities for our graduate students. The institute hosted the 2nd SUT Graduate Conference on 21-22 January at Surasammanakhan. In fact, this conference could be a national graduate conference, because half of the participants came from 7 well known universities in Thailand or it could be an international graduate conference, since apart from Thai students, there were students from Myanmar, China, India and Bhutan. The success of the graduate conference due perhaps to the Fourth International Workshop for Far East Asian Young Rheologists (IWFEAYR-4) organized at the same time on 21-23 January which attracted more graduate students to attend both national and international atmospheres. Papers presented at the SUT Graduate Conference were reviewed and have been continued to be published in the SUT

Journal of Science and Technology. Many thanks to those involved in the organization for both conferences, especially Assist.Prof.Dr.Visit Vao-soongnern, the main organizer who brought the IWFEAYR-4 to SUT.

At undergraduate level in sport science, this academic year began badly and we can take no pride that six out of ten fourth year students were on probation and had to drop their study for one term since they took their freshmen outside, in front of, the university for a reception party. This means that only four students can go for co-operative education and graduate within four years. This year we were able to recruit 98 students. It looks quite good in terms of the number of students, but statistically, the drop out rate after their first year is still quite high.

There are two main challenges in order to reduce the drop out rate. The first is to ensure that the candidates understand the nature of our curriculum. Because the large number of students thought that they don't have to study so hard in the sport science program before studying at SUT. In fact, they have to study many science subjects because this is the science of sport curriculum. The second challenge is to help them in their study, especially, for their first year. Like many first year students in other schools, they need a lot of help in order to get through this transition period from school to university.

At faculty level, we congratulate Prof.Dr.Prasart Suebka for being appointed by the king to be the rector for the second term. The administrative S-curve has started in his first term and, together with the young and energetic administrators' team, will surely be accelerated up in his second term. We congratulate Prof.Dr.Shukit Limpijumnong who was amongst just 12 academics in the country to be awarded the TRF Senior Research Scholar 2009, which is the highest for research scholars awarded by the TRF (Thailand Research Fund) and will enable him to receive grant of up to 7.5 million Baht within the next three years.

There were four departures amongst our faculties. Assoc.Prof.Dr. SumnaoPatisena and Assoc.Prof.Dr.Worasit Uchai (Physics) retired after 17 and 10 years of working at SUT respectively. The third departure was that of Assist.Prof.Dr.Tritaporn Choosri (Chemistry) retired after 16 years. To make their retirement, a party organized by the institute was held at Surasammanakhan on 30 September. It was attended by over 30 participants, including member of our university and their formal students. The gratitude of their students and peers

were reflected in their honour at the party. Dr. Tritaporn and Dr. Worasit will continue to supervise their graduate students until they complete their study. Dr. Worasit will go to work for Nakhon Phanom University at his home town in Nakhon Phanom province. We also said good-bye to Assist. Prof. Dr. Waree Widjaja, who had been working with us since 1997 and helped to start our sport science program. Dr. Waree resigned in order to take up a position at Mahidol University. We wish them well in their future career.

We welcome six new faculties who have joined us this year, including Assist. Prof. Dr. Kornnika Kanobdee (Anatomy), Assist. Prof. Dr. Nooduan Muangsan (Biology), Assist. Prof. Dr. Rattikorn Yimnirun (Physics), Dr. Naruwan Saowakon (Anatomy), Dr. Porntep Ratchanavy, and Ajarn Weerapon Chantima (Sport Science).

We also welcome the new head of the dean office. The position was kept vacant for a few years after it was started quite badly. Mrs. Ladapha ratanajaru, who was previously working at the library, was elected to take up the post.

We would like to thank two formal institute administrators, Assist. Prof. Dr. Visit Vao-soongnern and Assist. Prof. Dr. Sageera Kupittayanant who did their best and did it very well indeed in their responsibility for the institute before they were asked to take bigger responsibility in the new university administration team. Assist. Prof. Dr. Rattikorn Yimnirun, with solid credentials in research, has been appointed as the new head of the research department. Dr. Pongrit Kruphrachaya, who has helped us in many academic service projects has been appointed as the deputy dean. We thank them all for their help and wish them well in their future positions.

The institute had another busy and fruitful year in terms of visitors. Over twenty visitors were foreigner and there was plenty of activity. The high point may be the one that Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presided over the ceremony for laying the founding stone for constructing the Center for Astronomical Education in SUT at the latitude of 14 degree north of the Equator on 14 October. The ceremony was held in the evening around 6:30 pm, and the atmosphere turned out perfect, even though we were worried about raining since it was raining almost everyday for two weeks before that. The sky was quite clear and the Jupiter, the only planet could be seen during that time, was very bright about 45 degrees above the horizon. Everything went well and it was a wonderful evening indeed. The construction will begin around June 2010 with

the budget of 75 million Baht for the 2010 fiscal year from the National Astronomical Research Institute of Thailand (Public Organization). Another highlight was that an honorary Ph.D. degree in Physics was given to Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn on the commencement day.

An MOU was signed between our institute and Faculty of Natural Science, Ruhr-Universitat Bochum, Germany. We started to transfer the training of the Gifted Students in Mathematics and Science Project to Nakhon Ratchasima, Bureerum and Surin Educational Service Area Offices 1 (สพท. เขต 1), in cooperation with three Provincial Administrative Organizations (อบจ) of Nakhon Ratchasima, Bureerum and Surin. An MOU was signed between SUT, the three offices and the three organizations. The Training of the POSN Olympiad in mathematics has also been transferred to Rajsima College; an MOU has been signed between the two parties also. These will help to release some of our faculties' academic services.

Our new website has been completed. The problem now and may be even harder than making the website itself is to put data and keep updating the data, news, information, etc., on the web. We want to translate the web into English and Chinese also. Last but by no means least, a strategy plan which was promised to be done within 2009 has not been completed. The first meeting was held on 30 September and the next will be on 8 January 2010. It is important and recommended by the internal academic quality assurance committee.

For a small institute like us, the future has to involve more collaboration with other institutions. Cooperation is not new, but more can be and is being achieved. In September, Prof.Dr.Takaaki Tsurumi from Tokyo Institute of Technology came to visit Assist.Prof.Dr.Rattikorn Yimnirun and asked us to be the host for an international conference in 2011 and I learnt that Prof.Dr.Shukit Limpijumnong and Assist.Prof.Dr.Visit Vao-soongnern, each has also accepted to be the next host of a conference to be held at SUT within the next three years. So we will look forward to see another successful year of our institute and to celebrate the 20th founding anniversary of SUT in 2010 as well.

Merry (somewhat belatedly) Christmas and Happy New Year!

Prapun Manyum