Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment (CERPA)

A Proposal Presented to the Government of Thailand

by

*Washington State University (U.S.A.), College of Education
and
University Partners for Academic Leadership (UPAL)*

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Background

The following proposal to develop a Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment (CERPA) is presented by the College of Education at Washington State University (WSU) and by University Partners for Academic Leadership (UPAL), also housed at WSU. Since 1996, several WSU faculty members have worked with nine public and private universities in Thailand in the following areas: (1) assisting in the design and delivery of doctoral programs in educational administration, (2) conducting cross-national research with Thai professors, and (3) providing technical assistance for the development of "autonomous" universities in Thailand. As a result of these experiences, the WSU faculty members have developed a broad understanding of Thailand's educational system, current educational reform policies, and the challenges faced by universities, public schools, and vocational/technical institutes seeking to implement educational reform policies.

Within this context, it is proposed that a center be created to (1) conduct research on educational reform policies currently being implemented in Thailand and (2) develop research-based recommendations for revising those policies and/or developing new policies. Since Thailand has no single governmental agency responsible for conducting research on educational reform policies, the establishment of an independent, objective agency for educational research and policy assessment would provide the Government of Thailand with critical data and information for the ongoing reform of the nation's educational system.

Since 1999, WSU's College of Education has assisted the Department of Educational Administration at Khon Kaen University (KKU) in the design and delivery of a doctoral program in educational administration. The first cohort of 14 KKU students is now completing doctoral dissertations on several critical areas of educational reform in Thailand, and a second cohort of 15 students recently began their doctoral studies in the program. (To illustrate the types of educational policy research that might be conducted under the auspices of CERPA, Attachment 1 presents the titles of several doctoral research studies being conducted by KKU students).

Recently, Dr. Merrill Oaks and Dr. Forrest W. Parkay from WSU and Dr. Wirot Sanrattana (Committee Chair of KKU's Doctoral Program in Educational Administration) discussed the possibility of faculty members and doctoral students from Thailand's universities conducting research in the broad areas of educational reform and policy assessment. On February 13, 2003, Drs. Oaks, Parkay, and Sanrattana met with Dr. Krasae Chanawongse, advisor to the Prime Minister, to seek his counsel regarding the proposed research and assessment center. During this productive meeting, a decision was made to prepare a proposal to establish a Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment (CERPA). The primary function of CERPA would be to provide research-based recommendations to the Government of Thailand regarding existing and needed educational reform policies.

The Proposal

Washington State University (WSU) and University Partners for Academic Leadership (UPAL), in partnership with the Government of Thailand, propose to establish the Center for Educational Research and

Policy Assessment (CERPA). The Center, supported by the Government of Thailand, would conduct educational policy research at all levels of Thai education and submit research-based policy recommendations directly to the Government of Thailand. Specifically, CERPA would have a twofold mission: (1) to provide the Thai Government with data on the effectiveness of existing educational policies and (2) to develop recommendations for new educational policies designed to address identified needs.

Purpose

As stated, the purpose of the Government-supported Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment (CERPA) would be to (1) provide the Prime Minister with accurate assessment data regarding the current status of educational reform policies and (2) develop research-based recommendations for new policies. WSU, a major research university in the U.S.A., and the nine Thai universities in the UPAL consortium would collaborate with the Government of Thailand on the design and conduct of selected research projects. For an initial five-year period beginning in 2004, each UPAL institution would encourage faculty research agendas and selected doctoral-level (and, as appropriate, masters-level) research studies to focus on critical educational reform policy areas in Thailand. During this five-year period, a comprehensive database of information on educational reform policies would be developed.

Evidence of Need

Thailand is now fully engaged in the reform and restructuring of its three levels of education. This broad-based educational renewal process was initiated through major educational reform policy mandates for higher education, fundamental education (grades K-12), and vocational/ technical education. As the following sections indicate very briefly, the three levels are involved in perhaps the most challenging reform effort ever undertaken in the history of the Kingdom.

Higher Education

Several years ago, Thailand's public universities were challenged to become fully "autonomous" by 2002. To date, only four universities have such status. Research conducted by CERPA could provide clear, data-based evidence regarding current and needed educational reform policies related to autonomous universities. For example, CERPA-initiated research could address questions such as the following: What are the barriers to an autonomous university system? What could be done to accelerate the process? How could policies be changed to reflect more realistic expectations?

Fundamental Education

At the fundamental education level (grades K-12), sweeping policy reforms were passed in l999. What progress has been made in implementing these reform policies? For example, to what degree has student-

centered teaching and learning been adopted? What research studies would provide data to guide the ongoing effort to implement this major reform? Is the mission of demonstration schools consistent with existing policy guidelines? Do current teacher professional development practices prepare teachers to become leaders in educational reform?

Vocational/Technical Education

Thailand's vocational/technical schools have been directed to make fundamental curricular and programmatic changes to be more responsive to the country's emerging work force needs and a global economy. Policy research studies initiated by CERPA would document progress at implementing these changes and lead to the development of recommendations for new change strategies. For example, why is there a high unemployment rate for some graduates of vocational/technical schools and not others? What are the emerging needs for vocational/ technical graduates during the next 5-10 years?

With respect to the reform-oriented questions posed in the preceding three sections, data are not available to answer these (and similar) questions, nor is there a single agency responsible for collecting such data. While modest progress has been made on the implementation of some educational reform policies, comprehensive and reliable research-based data would greatly enhance the implementation of these policies.

Resources Available to CERPA

Washington State University (WSU) and University Partners for Academic Leadership (UPAL) have the resource capacity to ensure that the Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment (CERPA) would become a valuable addition to the current Thai educational reform effort, from kindergarten through higher education. The following sections outline briefly the resources that would provide strength, depth-of-experience, and objectivity for the proposed center.

Washington State University (WSU)

WSU (http://www.wsu.edu) is classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching as a "Doctoral/Research University—Extensive," the highest status a research university can hold in the U.S.A. WSU offers more than 100 major fields of study including 69 bachelor's degrees, 66 master's degrees, and 43 doctoral degrees. In fall 2001, WSU enrolled 22,000 undergraduate and graduate students, of whom 1,300 were non-U.S. nationals from 93 different countries.

WSU is ranked among the top research universities in America according to the Carnegie Foundation. And, WSU is one of just two universities in the Northwest to be ranked among the top 50 public universities in America by *U.S. News & World Report*.

WSU has been an international leader in the application of advanced telecommunications to educational programs. The University was identified as the United States' "most-wired" public university, according to

Yahoo Internet Life. WSU has satellite up-link capacity, employs video streaming in web-based courses, and is experimenting with emerging broadband technologies utilizing Internet II.

WSU has a long history of participation in institutional and human development activities in other countries. In addition to the UPAL project, WSU has collaborated with Kasetsart, Khon Kaen, Mahasarakham, and Prince of Songkla Universities on projects in agriculture, international business, international communications, and veterinary medicine

University Partners for Academic Leadership (UPAL)

University Partners for Academic Leadership (UPAL) is a cross-national partnership between WSU, nearby University of Idaho (UI), and nine universities—public and private—in Thailand; (see Figure 1, UPAL Organizational Chart). Specifically, "UPAL is a consortium of Thai and U.S. universities committed to serving as a support mechanism to facilitate the reform of higher education in Thailand in the following four broad areas: (1) academic programs for students, (2) institutional development, (3) staff development for faculty, and (4) leadership development for administrators" (UPAL mission statement, May 2002; also see Figure 2, The Mission and Functions of UPAL).

<Insert Figures 1 & 2 here.>

Funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, UPAL sponsored a Leadership Institute at WSU (May 12-31, 2002) for the presidents and two vice presidents at UPAL institutions. (Most of the vice presidents were in the areas of planning and development and academic affairs). The presidents attended for eight days (Session 1) and the vice presidents for 16 days (Session 2). During the overlapping segment of the Institute (May 16-19), the presidents (1) communicated to their vice presidents the leadership insights they derived from their Institute experiences and (2) outlined a strategic plan to be developed by the vice presidents during Session 2.

The Institute focused on strategies for developing "autonomous" universities as outlined in Thailand's *Ninth National Education Development Plan (2002-2006)*. The *Plan* addresses six dimensions of higher education reform: (1) quality and excellence, (2) access and equity, (3) efficiency and accountability, (4) relevance and delivery, (5) internationalization and regionalization, and (6) privatization and corporatization.

The UPAL Leadership Institute gave participants opportunities to interact with their counterparts from other UPAL institutions and from WSU and UI. During this time they tested new ideas and developed new strategies for leading their institutions into the future. A key benefit of the Leadership Institute was the opportunity for participants to interact among themselves in a "neutral" setting and to develop short- and long-range strategies to position the UPAL institutions to provide national leadership for the reform of higher education in Thailand.

The Leadership Institute provided participants with a high quality executive-level professional development experience. Through a unique blend of interactions with their counterparts at WSU and UI,

opportunities for dialogue and reflection, and visits to   academic and administrative units at WSU, UPAL participants acquired knowledge and skills to enhance their ability to provide effective, visionary leadership at their home institutions. During the Institute, participants learned from their counterparts at WSU and UI

about strategic planning in areas such as quality assurance, efficiency and effectiveness, human resource management, staff development, performance assessment, and funding. In addition, UPAL participants developed strategic action plans in four key areas: networking, international exchanges, staff development, and English language proficiency.

Obviously, the UPAL consortium provides an existing framework for the identification of CERPA researchers and administrative personnel. In addition, CERPA could serve as a catalyst for U.S. and Thai faculty members as they develop research portfolios required for tenure and promotion. In some cases, perhaps, faculty members could be given small research grants by CERPA to conduct research on particular educational reform policies.

As mentioned earlier, doctoral students at UPAL institutions annually conduct research that is directly related to educational reform policies being implemented at Thailand's universities, fundamental (K-12) schools, and vocational/technical institutes. These doctoral students—under the supervision of CERPA staff, their home institution, and WSU and UI advisors—could perform valuable policy research, culminating in data-based, objective policy recommendations for the Government of Thailand. For example, at KKU, the second cohort of 15 doctoral students recently completed a workshop on educational policy research methodologies, and they are now analyzing educational policy research issues under the supervision of WSU research professors and doctoral research advisors at KKU. Specific policy research studies currently being conducted these students are presented in Attachment 1.

As suggested, the UPAL consortium is well positioned to facilitate policy research conducted by CERPA. Moreover, adding new members to the UPAL consortium is a distinct possibility, since the special needs and considerations of each geographic section of the country would need to be addressed through CERPA's research agenda.

WSU's Assessment and Evaluation Center

WSU's Assessment and Evaluation Center is directed by Dr. Michael Trevisan, who has worked at KKU and will return to work at Naresuan University as a Fulbright Specialist later this year. The Assessment and Evaluation Center conducts research and assessment on educational programs at WSU and throughout the state of Washington and the U.S.A. To date, the Center has obtained approximately $1.5 million (U.S.) in funding. Dr. Trevisan has the experience, expertise, and background to make a strong contribution to CERPA. The Assessment and Evaluation Center would develop the evaluation- and assessment-related activities of CERPA.

WSU Professors with Research and Teaching   Experience in Thailand

   Five WSU research professors have had recent experiences teaching, advising doctoral students, and conducting cross-national research at several universities in Thailand; (Attachment 2 includes brief biographical sketches of these professors). Dr. Dennis Warner, Associate Dean for the College of Education;

Dr. Forrest W. Parkay, Director of UPAL, co-advisor to the KKU doctoral cohort, catalyst for the Thailand project, and former Fulbright Scholar at Kasetsart University (1996-97); Dr. Merrill Oaks, WSU Professor Emeritus, Co-associate Director of UPAL, and recent instructor of a policy and research workshop at KKU; Dr. Mike Trevisan, Director of the WSU Assessment and Evaluation Center; and Dr. Willie Heggins, III, Co-associate Director of UPAL, have indicated their desire to become involved with CERPA.

U.S. Research Universities Affiliated with WSU

   Washington State University (WSU) has partnerships with several major research universities in the U.S.A., including the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington, and the University of Idaho in neighboring Moscow, Idaho. Both institutions work well with WSU and have a long history of collaboration on grants, contracts, and research. The University of Idaho is a member of the UPAL consortium and actively collaborates with WSU on program sharing, grants, contracts, and research in education, medicine, and veterinary medicine.

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Structure, Governance, and Functions of CERPA

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- The governance and management of CERPA would be the primary responsibility of the Government of Thailand, in partnership with WSU's College of Education and members of the UPAL consortium; (see Figure 3, Organizational Chart, Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment [CERPA]).

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<Insert Figure 3 here.>

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- A CERPA Advisory Council would be created to represent all levels of education in Thailand and all geographic and political constituents.

- The current membership of the UPAL consortium would be analyzed to determine if the consortium should be expanded to include other Thai universities.

- While CERPA-affiliated researchers would be independent of agencies responsible for the management and oversight of education in Thailand, they would work collaboratively with those agencies on issues of mutual concern.

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- CERPA research staff and office support staff would be located in Bangkok in appropriate office space, with state-of-the-art telecommunications equipment.

- To ensure objectivity and freedom from the influence of special interest groups and/or individuals in conducting research and formulating recommendations, CERPA's administrative personnel would be appointed from outside existing Thai educational agencies.

- CERPA would have a Director, and three Co-associate Directors (one for each level of education in Thailand). Drs. Parkay, Oaks, Trevisan, Wirot, and Heggins have indicated their interest in these administrative appointments.

- Research projects would be identified by the Prime Minister and/or his chief educational counsels, in collaboration with CERPA staff and other agencies approved by the Prime Minister's office.

- CERPA research projects would be conducted by teams of university faculty and doctoral students approved by members of the UPAL consortium.

Conclusion

As pointed out earlier, a collaboratively operated Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment would provide the Government of Thailand with critically needed information regarding educational reform policies—their implementation status, degree of policy compliance, recommendations for revision, and recommendations for future educational policies.

An "independent" research center to advise the Prime Minister regarding educational reform policies would send a strong signal that education is critically important and will receive top priority in the Kingdom. A research-based, policy-analysis approach would "objectify" the process of reform, reduce the negative influence of special interest groups and/or individuals, and enhance Government credibility regarding educational reform.

ATTACHMENT 1

Representative Educational Reform Policy Studies

The following educational policy research projects are currently being conducted by doctoral students at KKU. These titles are representative of studies that could be conducted under the guidance and supervision of staff at the proposed Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment (CERPA).

- *The Effectiveness of Student-centered Learning in Selected Thai 1-12 Grade Level Schools*

- *A Comparison of the Perceived and Actual Role and Mission of Fundamental Demonstration Schools*

- *The Role of Quality Assurance in Thai Institutions of Higher Education*

- *The Effectiveness of School-Based Management: Recommendations for Improvement*

- *The Effect of Stress on Primary School Principals*

- *The Importance of School-Based Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Teachers*

- *The Impact of the Language Barrier for Ya Wee-speaking Students from Southern Thailand Enrolled in Thai Speaking Educational Programs: Recommendations and Solutions*

- *The Impact of Autonomy on Thai Public Universities*

- *The Affect of School Climate on Teachers and Principals in Primary and Secondary Schools*

- *Key Factors in the Professional Development of Primary School Principals: Preparing for Successful Reform*

- *Evaluation of Quality Assurance Programs in the Public University: Review and Recommendations*

- *High Unemployment of Alumni of Thai Technical Colleges: Recommendations for Change*

- *Behavior Standards for Technical College Students: Key Factors for Improvemen*

- *Alternatives for Kindergarten Students in Thai Preschools*

ATTACHMENT 2

CERPA Planning Committee Members

Comments and questions about the CERPA proposal can be addressed to the following persons affiliated with WSU's College of Education and the UPAL project.

- **Dr. Judy Mitchell** (judym@wsu.edu). Dr. Mitchell is Dean of the College of Education at WSU. She has provided College resources to support WSU-Thai partnership activities during the last three years, and she was an active participant in the UPAL Leadership Institute at WSU during summer 2002. During April 14-17, 2003, Dr. Mitchell hosted a group of KKU professors and students who participated in the *International Symposium on Research in Education 2003* sponsored by WSU's College of Education and held on the Washington State University campus.

- **Dr. Dennis Warner** (dwarner@wsu.edu). Dr. Warner is Associate Dean of the College of Education and Professor at WSU. In 2001, he conducted a two-week workshop for students in KKU's Doctoral Program in Educational Administration. Dr. Warner's expertise is in research design and statistics, and he has guided the doctoral research of more than 100 students during his career.

- **Dr. Forrest W. Parkay** (fwparkay@wsu.edu). Dr. Parkay, Professor of Educational Leadership and Higher Education in WSU's College of Education, is Director of the UPAL project. He was a Fulbright Scholar at Kasetsart University's Center for Research on Teaching and Teacher Education during 1996-97; and, since 2001, he has made several trips to Thailand as a Fulbright Senior Specialist. Dr. Parkay was instrumental in establishing the KKU-WSU collaborative Doctoral Program in Educational Administration. The author of several refereed journal articles on education in Thailand, Dr. Parkay was a Visiting Professor at Assumption University from November 2002 to April 2003.

- **Dr. Merrill Oaks** (merrilloaks@hotmail.com). Dr. Oaks is Co-associate Director of UPAL and Professor Emeritus at WSU. He has three years experience working with Thai universities and recently conducted an educational policy research workshop for doctoral students at KKU.

- **Dr. Michael Trevisan** (trevisan@wsu.edu). Dr. Trevisan is Director of the Assessment and Evaluation Center at WSU. Dr. Trevisan is a Fulbright Specialist, and, in that capacity, he will soon conduct a workshop at Naresuan University. He also conducted a workshop at KKU during 2002.

- **Dr. Wirot Sanrattana** (wirsan@kku.ac.th). Dr. Wirot is Committee Chair, Doctoral Program in Educational Administration, Khon Kaen University. Dr. Sanrattana is responsible for developing KKU's Doctoral Program in Educational Administration, including that program's collaborative activities with WSU.

- **Dr. Willie J. Heggins, III** (wheggins@wsu.edu). Dr. Heggins is Assistant Professor of Higher Education at WSU and Co-associate Director of UPAL. Dr. Heggins has worked in Thailand, and he will teach a WSU educational administration course in Bangkok during June 2003. Dr. Heggins has participated in cross-national research projects in Thailand and South Africa. Currently, he is

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- working with KKU professors and doctoral students who will participate in the *International Symposium on Research in Education 2003* held at WSU, April 14-17, 2003.
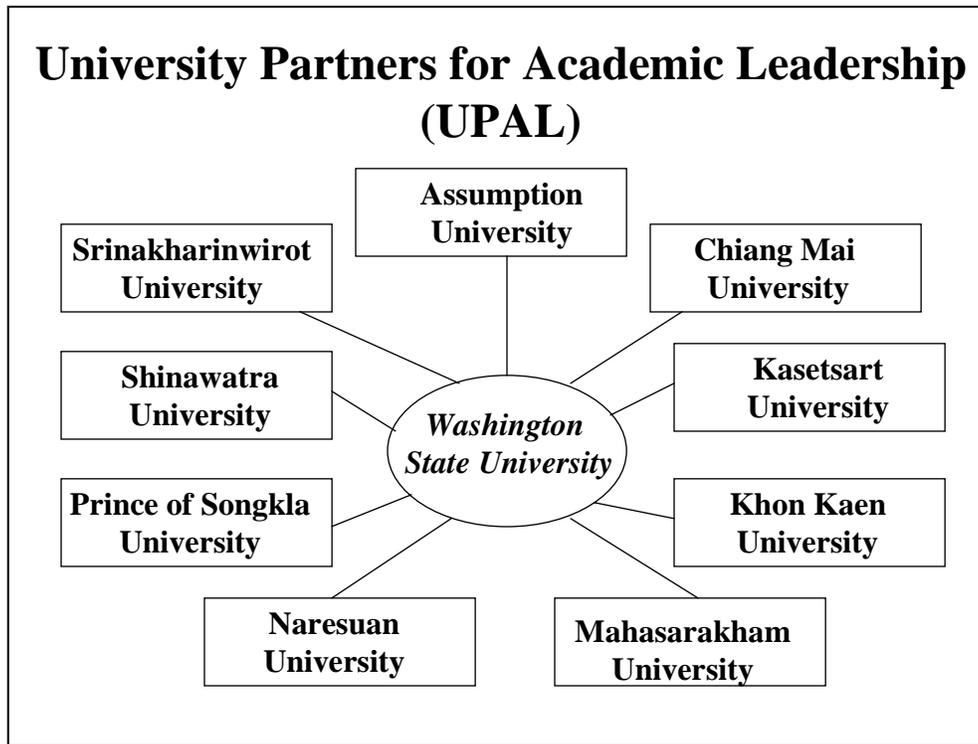
Figure 1

UPAL Organizational Chart

University Partners for Academic Leadership (UPAL)

- Assumption University
- Srinakharinwirot University
- Chiang Mai University
- Shinawatra University
- *Washington State University*
- Kasetsart University
- Prince of Songkla University
- Khon Kaen University
- Naresuan University
- Mahasarakham University

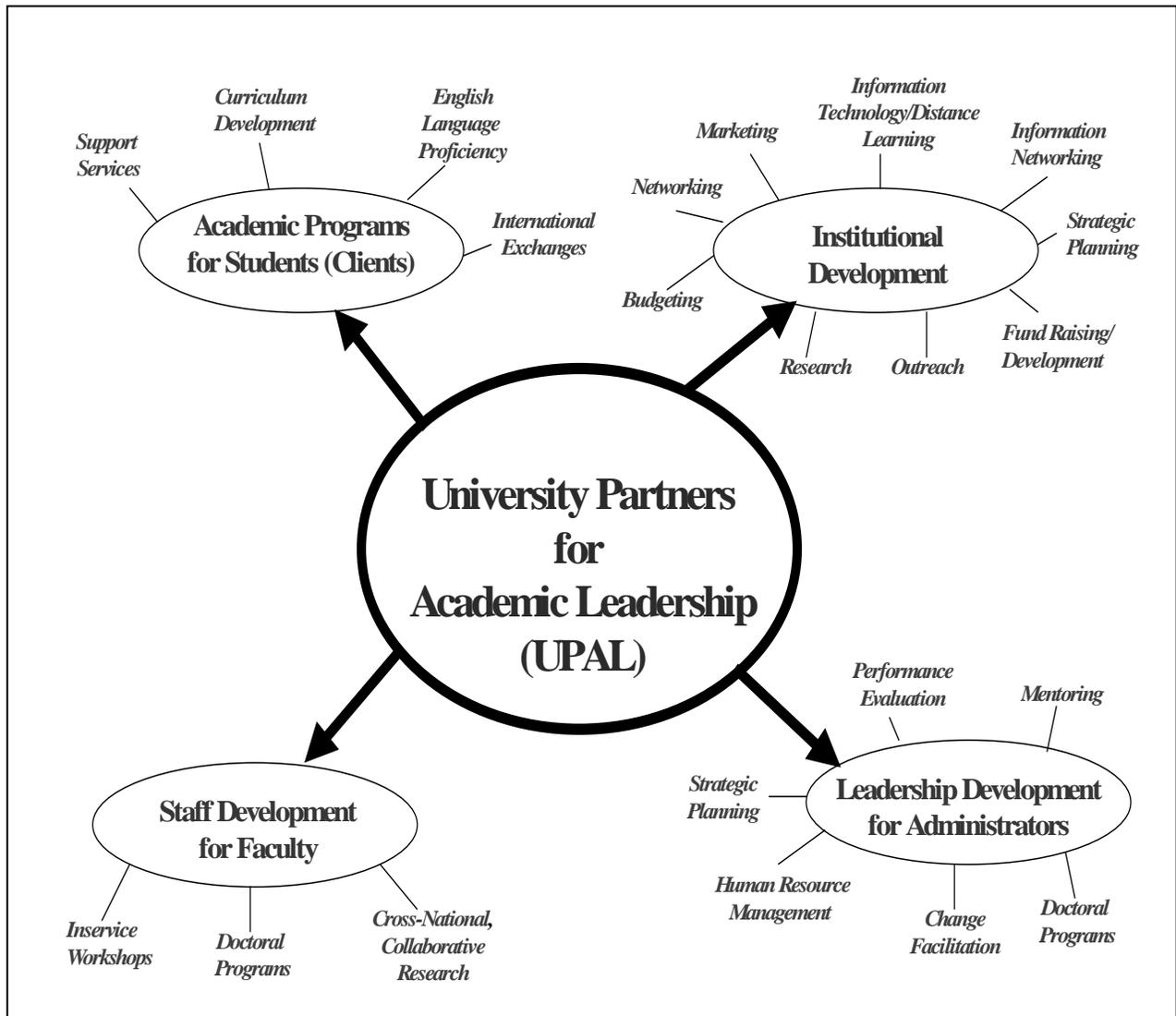**Figure 2**

The Mission and Functions of UPAL

Figure 3

Organizational Chart

Center for Educational Research and Policy Assessment (CERPA)