
WELCOMING REMARK

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Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of the World Nuclear University, I am pleased to welcome you to this important IAEA Conference on Knowledge Management.

What is the WNU?

The World Nuclear University was inaugurated one year ago in London as a partnership of the world's leading institutions of nuclear learning. This partnership, spanning some 30 countries, has four "Founding Supporters".

Two of the WNU's Founding Supporters are inter-governmental organisations: the IAEA and the NEA. Two are global associations of the industry: WANO and the World Nuclear Association. Underpinning the WNU partnership will be financial support from the industry's most forward-looking companies and, where appropriate, from the technical assistance programme of the IAEA.

The WNU's essential aim is to foster inter-institutional cooperation to enhance nuclear coursework worldwide and to establish widely accepted global standards in academic and professional qualification. Our goal is nothing less than to help prepare the nuclear profession for an age of globalisation in which nuclear energy must play a central role if our world is to reconcile economic development with environmental preservation.

A major activity of the WNU partnership will be the conduct of an annual WNU Summer Institute, which will comprise 6 weeks of intense training to develop and inspire future world leaders in nuclear technology. The first WNU Summer Institute will be held in July and August of 2005 at the Idaho Nuclear Laboratory, the designated headquarters of the American nuclear renaissance. We anticipate working with the IAEA to generate an attendance of some 60 talented students and young professionals from as many as 30 countries.

For some people, the WNU idea has been difficult to grasp, and not surprisingly because it is unfamiliar. When we think of a university, we tend to envisage a campus with an institutional identity and a large enrolment of students pursuing degrees from that institution. The WNU is something entirely different. It is, and I cannot overemphasise this word, a true partnership – not a degree-awarding institution but a composite of its participating institutions, each of which will continue to teach and award degrees. Our aim is that the cooperative WNU mechanism will help each of its participating institutions to do better what they already do.

Along the way, we hope to reach agreement among participating institutions on courses and curricula that qualify for WNU-certification; i.e., recognition as having attained a high international standard. Such certification can be valuable to graduating students and, consequently, to the participating institutions.

In understanding the WNU, some analogy can be found in Oxford, a town in England filled with colleges – each with its own history and identity and faculty and students. Together, these colleges comprise Oxford University. There is, in Oxford, a common practice of students attending tutorials at other colleges, and professors giving lectures to students assembled from all colleges. In this way, Oxford functions as a creative partnership among its colleges, which operate to mutual advantage. The WNU takes this example to a global stage. The mutually beneficial partnership among our participating institutions is the World Nuclear University.

The launch of the WNU has been either amazingly fast or agonisingly slow, depending on your perspective. Considering that it has been less than two years since the World Nuclear

Association began work on transforming the WNU from a vague idea to a concrete reality, the pace has been fast. On the other hand, those of us believe that this is “an idea whose time has come” are impatient for action.

Fortunately, action has now begun. This month the WNU Coordinating Centre will begin operations in London, in co-location with the WNA. We are beginning with 4 senior nuclear professionals: two from America, supplied by the Department of Energy; one from France, supplied by Areva Group; and one from China, supplied by Tsinghua University. Two of these professionals will focus on designing and coordinating next year’s WNU Summer Institute. Two of us will work to galvanise into action the WNU’s ten cooperative Working Groups, each of which comprises a worldwide group of experts in a particular nuclear or nuclear-related discipline.

One of these ten WNU Working Groups is focused on Knowledge Management, the topic of this conference. Our goal is work with the IAEA to transform KM from a long-talked-about idea into an operational programme of action involving the world’s leading nuclear companies and the WNU’s institutions of nuclear learning.

Let me close this introduction by emphasising a key feature of the WNU partnership and by making a key distinction:

- First, a key feature of the WNU: There are no barriers to entry. This is a voluntary collaboration, which offers individuals and institutions the opportunity to bring their strengths, creativity and vision to the task of enhancing nuclear science and strengthening the nuclear profession for an ever wider global role.
- Second, a key distinction: Do not think of the WNU as a “they”. The WNU is not a “they”; it is all of us – that is, any and all of us who wish to join in pursuing these exciting and critically valuable goals. The partnership embraces all of its participating institutions of nuclear learning, as well as the four Founding Supporters and the full diversity of companies that comprise the global nuclear industry. It is a unique – and, I believe, much needed – mechanism of cooperation, offering enormous potential if we use it well. I invite all of you become part of the “us”.