

February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

Dear Iskander Beisembetov,

Since my official resignation letter needed to be signed by Dr. Akulov, I thought it best to keep it short and to send a separate follow-up letter. I would like to give further details about the events leading up to Dr. Akulov daring me to resign, and my subsequent decision to do so. I have also asked Dr. Roussev to read this letter, and the attached report, and to write his own letter. He can confirm many of the facts in my report and explain in his own words his own decision to seek employment elsewhere after his first year. We feel it is our ethical duty to let you know about the damage we believe Dr. Akulov is doing to KBTU, and the General Education Faculty in particular. His behavior has a direct effect on KBTU's long-term interests, both in financial terms, and in terms of faculty morale and quality of education for the students. We would have written sooner, but we were afraid for our jobs, before our decisions to leave, due to Dr. Akulov's threats, described in the attached report.

One of the primary reasons we believe Dr. Akulov is damaging KBTU is his inability to retain foreign faculty. We do not expect this to end with ourselves, but to continue as a pattern, due to the professional and personal problems I describe in my report. Many foreign PhDs may be reluctant to move outside their country of origin, especially if they do not know much about Kazakhstan, or if they do not speak the language. If they are married or have children, it might be even more difficult to make such a transition. So when PhD's with internationally recognized degrees join KBTU, it is important to make sure they want to stay. And as the saying goes "*people don't leave jobs – they leave supervisors.*" That was certainly true both for myself and Dr. Roussev.

Like many of KBTU's foreign faculty, I knew little about Kazakhstan before I arrived. And the little information I could find was not high quality. So my biggest concern was what it would be like to live here. I discovered, however, that Kazakhstan is a great country, with an interesting culture and history and lots of potential. And Almaty in particular is a great city to live and work in. In fact, I enjoy it so much that I will be staying in Almaty and attempting to find other work here, if possible. (I believe Dr. Roussev attempted to do the same.) I plan to return to the U.S. only if my employment situation warrants it. So, the biggest obstacle to my initial move was something outside of KBTU's control – uncertainty about Kazakhstan. That turned out to be no problem once I arrived. Dr. Roussev has expressed similar very positive feelings about Kazakhstan, and Almaty in particular. As for the job at KBTU itself, Dr. Roussev and I agree that the students at KBTU are bright, and our colleagues – other than Dr. Akulov – were all friendly and easy to get along with. We were also impressed, and grateful, that after the devaluation our salaries were converted into dollars. We realized this was a difficult thing for KBTU to do, both legally and financially, and were very thankful for that generosity. The point is that neither of us really wanted to leave KBTU. And neither of us would have, had it not been for the sheer impossibility of dealing with Dr. Akulov – something that *is* within KBTU's control.

It would be impossible to catalog every incident we had with Dr. Akulov, since the types of problem I will describe were incessant. But to give you some idea, I have organized just a small number of the most serious problems with Dr. Akulov's behavior into a few general categories. I have then illustrated each of these with some examples. I have then followed these examples with some brief explanations of their negative results. Even after leaving out all minor issues, focusing on only a small

number of the most serious issues, and then abbreviating even those down to just a few representative examples, the summary extends to almost 50 pages. (And I stress that it is only a *summary*.) I have therefore presented it as a report attached separately.

If I had to summarize Dr. Akulov's performance as dean in a single word, it would be: Chaos. And if I had to summarize how he interacts with his faculty in a single word, it would be: Abuse.

More precisely, in the attached summary, I group the problems into two broad categories:

(A) a management style characterized by:

- (1) disorganization and lack of planning, and
- (2) forgetfulness, impulsivity, and lack of focus

(B) an interpersonal style exhibiting a cyclical pattern of:

- (1) blame-shifting,
- (2) negative misinterpretations and hostile responses to suggestions, and
- (3) emotionalizing, minimizing, and ignoring his faculty's concerns.

As I explain in the attached summary, the poor management skills lead to various kinds of crisis, while the interpersonal style makes improvements and progress nearly impossible. This leads back to a point of crisis. And the cycle repeats itself.

I believe this cyclical pattern of behavior will ultimately lead any foreign faculty to leave, so long as they have the option to. (Consider that both Dr. Roussev and myself did, despite seriously negative consequences and risks for both of us – but these were prices we were more than willing to pay). I would therefore respectfully advise monitoring the relationship between Dr. Akulov and his foreign faculty. I predict that it will follow the same pattern I have described in the attached summary.

Although highly abbreviated, I have explained these issues as well as I can in the attached summary, so that you can decide for yourself whether keeping Dr. Akulov at KBTU is worth the high price that KBTU is paying: a price of decreased instructor morale, decreased quality of education, loss of foreign faculty, and the costs in time and money that all of these inevitably incur.

Sincerely,

Beau Branson, PhD  
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enclosure: Summary of Problems With Dr. Akulov

cc: Yuri V. Loktionov, Vice-Rector for Graduate and International Programs  
Bagdaulet K. Kenzhaliyev, Vice-Rector for Innovation  
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