

RECTOR'S ADDRESS

For our university, the year 2014 was fruitful and rich in various events. We can definitely say that this year was guided by the overall objectives set for Russian higher education institutions, and that we made every effort to gain the leading positions which Voronezh region Governor A.V. Gordeev had emphasized. This is most evident in our position in a large number of international rankings and the monitoring of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. Despite the outside challenges, we were able to ensure the continuity of our "line of development" in all the university's areas of activity.

In the last year, all the staff and members of our university – the faculty, employees, postgraduate and undergraduate students – have repeatedly demonstrated their clear civic and patriotic position. We have become closer and stronger; we have learnt to respond realistically to the challenges of the present situation; and we have been persistent and rather pragmatic in searching for ways of sustaining the progress achieved thus far and continuing to move forward. I hope the information provided below will serve well to illustrate this.

Furthermore, I would like to point out that, in spite of all our achievements, neither the university administration, the faculty deans, nor the heads of academic and teaching departments, have by any means lost their critical attitude to our development. None of us are anywhere near self-complacency. We are well aware of how many more reserves are still untapped; how many tasks are yet to be tackled; how much more has to be done.

■ **Key factors shaping the development of Russian universities in 2014**

In 2014, the activities of VSU, like those of all the Russian universities, were determined by the country's strategy aimed at increasing the international competitiveness of higher education, as well as at improving the quality of training specialists for Russian economic and social sphere. These objectives were outlined in V.V. Putin's presidential decrees (2012) and were once again confirmed by V.V. Putin in his speech at the Tenth conference of the Russian Rectors' Union on 30 October 2014.

In their work, the university administration and VSU's academic and teaching staff are primarily guided by the public policy principles developed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. The Ministry's main focus is on improv-

ing the universities' efficiency, promoting the most effective initiatives, and increasing the requirements for university senior officers and academic staff. Voronezh State University's multi-faceted activities are based largely on the principles of the RF State Program of Education Development until 2020.

Another significant factor determining VSU's work in 2014 was the implementation of a set of measures to improve the social status of the academic staff.

Due to a rise in the number of government tenders in science and innovations, the university's faculty members have taken an active part in submitting requests for scientific research under Federal Target Programmes.

■ VSU's MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2014

During the year, Voronezh State University Strategic Development Plan was successfully implemented. In a number of spheres, VSU's results have exceeded previous assessments.

In 2014, new students poured into VSU who we can all take pride in. 3435 students enrolled in Bachelor's and Specialist's degree programmes, and another 806 joined Master's degree programmes. The average exam score was 70.2 for those who enrolled in state-funded programmes (which is 9th among the other classical universities of Russia). A third of the applicants are high school graduates from 75 constituent territories of the Russian Federation, which clearly indicates the high level of VSU's academic reputation and its de facto federal status.

Despite the existing problems, *VSU's financial state* has been stable, which has allowed for a substantial wage increase for the academic and teaching staff. The university was able to increase the salaries by 142% of the regional average instead of the planned 135%. VSU's financial sustainability has enabled the construction of a modern comfortable dormitory to be completed.

Yet another area of dynamic development at VSU is *research*. In 2014, we received over 420 million roubles from various funding sources, which is 120 million more than the previous year. There has been an increase in the number of works published by the academic staff and graduate students. Successful implementation of the programme of purchasing new scientific equipment, including some unique items, is going to make it possible to widen the scope of academic research.

In 2014, *the third university performance monitoring was carried out* by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. Despite the toughened stand-

ards, our university demonstrated impressive results comparable to those of the best national universities.

In *the sphere of innovations*, the university is currently continuing the successful programme of collaboration with the Central Federal District's companies, including some hi-tech production projects. The number of university-based joint small innovative businesses has risen to 30.

In 2014, VSU projects received 237 million roubles as part of the "Research and development in top-priority areas of science and technology in Russia for 2015-2020" Federal Target Programme. It is worth noting that these projects were developed in collaboration with reputable industrial partners. Our young scholars showed the best results at the Voronezh Regional Innovation Cup.

Notwithstanding the strained international atmosphere, our university has been developing *international contacts* with a large number of universities in Europe, the USA, China, and several Arab countries. In 2014, VSU received over 6 million roubles participating in international foundations and programmes. This is one of the best results in Russia, which is further confirmed by the recognition of our work from the European Union Ambassador in Russia. Academic and student exchange programmes are also rapidly expanding.

VSU has been ensuring the successful implementation of a *student social development programme*. The students' persistence and their proactive approach have enabled us to win a grant for student activity development from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

2014 saw an important contribution to enhancing the university's infrastructure: a new dormitory was completed, and the construction of a new sporting facility with a swimming pool began.

These are only the brightest and the most memorable achievements of the university in the course of 2014. They are described in more detail on the pages of the annual report. Generally, there have been improvements in every sphere of our activity, but this shouldn't make us rest on our laurels – there are a lot of challenging objectives for Voronezh State University in 2015.

■ VSU's OBJECTIVES FOR 2015

We will continue persistent and goal-oriented work on implementing a set of policies that would enable us to counter negative recessionary tendencies in order to keep our university's "line of development", stipulated by the strategic plan and programmes.

It is our duty to ensure a high level of education and social development of students, taking into consideration the new challenges, scientific achievements and inter-scientific connections.

The university's scholars are faced with the need to raise the efficiency of scientific research and implement their results in the training and production processes, as well as the task of strengthening co-operation with business entities. This will strengthen the university's leadership position in the region in order for it to continue to have a profound impact on the region's educational, social, economic, and cultural development.

In organizational terms, the challenge ahead is to increase accountability in all sectors of development, among other things, by means of the mechanism of an effective employment contract.

Another possible task is resolving integration issues in the regional system of VSU-based educational establishments.

We are also faced with a rather ambitious challenge of further development of engineering programmes, in addition to obtaining the licence for three medical programmes: medical cybernetics, medical biophysics, and medical biochemistry.

The efforts of the university management must primarily be focused on including the "VSU Information Technologies Centre" project into the Federal Programme of Education Development until 2020.

In 2015, our university is to take an active part in a wide range of programmes and projects as part of the year of "Voronezh as the Cultural Capital of CIS".

Another important date that shouldn't be missed is the 90th anniversary of "Galichya Gora" reserve, which must be celebrated at the university in 2015.

Our principled position is that it is essential to raise awareness of the humanitarian dimension of university education; shaping the students' patriotic and civic position, as well as promoting a healthy lifestyle. It should also be remembered that 2015 is the 70th anniversary year of the Great Patriotic War.

In 2015, we must put an emphasis on developing the university's international contacts and raising our competitiveness in the scientific and educational community.

The abovementioned tasks and ways of dealing with them are explained in more detail in the sections of the report. We are convinced that, even considering all the po-

tential difficulties and challenges, the staff of the university have all the prerequisites for putting all these ideas into practice: professional integrity and professionalism, established traditions and accumulated experience, as well as a desire to work in the interests of the university, the region, and the country as a whole.