UMass Amherst Officials Travel to New Delhi to Help Launch International Education Collaborative

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AMHERST, Mass. – Today in New Delhi, India, the University of Massachusetts Amherst joined more than a dozen leading U.S. universities in signing an agreement with AMRITA University and other Indian institutions to enhance higher education in India through a satellite e-learning network. Microsoft Corp., QUALCOMM Inc. and Cadence Design Systems Inc. will help fund U.S. participation in the program.

Three representatives from UMass Amherst gathered at the presidential palace in New Delhi with leaders from other universities, corporate representatives and Indian government officials, including President APJ Abdul Kalam of India, to sign a three-year Memorandum of Understanding for the U.S. Inter-University Collaborative in Higher Education and Research.

“We are delighted to take part in this opportunity to expand international academic collaborations,” said UMass Amherst Vice Provost for Research Paul Kostecki, who attended the signing with John R. Mullin, dean of the graduate school, and Nigar Khan, associate graduate dean. “These partnerships benefit all involved,” said Kostecki. “They expose our faculty to potential research and academic partnerships in India, and they help to drive innovation at the global level.”

Vanket Rangan, vice chancellor of AMRITA University, has spearheaded the effort to form the collaboration, designed to enhance education in India, particularly in science and engineering. Leading American professors from participating institutions will be encouraged to travel to India for semester-long teaching stints at AMRITA University, covering such topics as nanotechnology, materials science, computer science and biotechnology. UMass Amherst stands out in being the only institution that will also have faculty from the social sciences participate.

Classes taught by participating faculty will be delivered to hundreds of colleges and universities throughout India over EDUSAT, an educational satellite launched by the Indian Space Research Association. In the future, the teaching materials of participating faculty and researchers may be included in a digital library. The government of India and its department of science and technology are also part of the partnership.

Universities joining UMass Amherst as part of the consortium are the University of California Berkeley, University of California San Diego, Carnegie Mellon University, University at Buffalo, Cornell University, Harvard University, University of Michigan, Princeton University, University of California Los Angeles, University of California at Santa Cruz, University of Texas at Austin, University of Washington, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Georgia Institute of Technology, Purdue University, University of Maryland and the University of North Dakota.

Microsoft Corp. and two other leading technology companies, QUALCOMM Inc. and Cadence Design Systems, Inc. will pay for U.S. expenses such as travel costs and salaries.

For additional information from the scene in India, contact Prashant R. Nair of AMRITA University at +91 422 2656422, ext. 300; cell phone: +91 9388014178; or e-mail: r_prashant@amrita.edu. Paul Kostecki of UMass Amherst can be reached in his hotel at 011-91-11-2334-1234. **Please note: New Delhi is 10 hours ahead** of Eastern Standard Time in the U.S. (4 p.m. EST Wednesday is 2 a.m. in New Delhi), so make contacts with that in mind.

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