

UW forges new ties with Indian educators, researchers

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by Paroma Basu

The president of India, APJ Abdul Kalam, announced today an unprecedented research and education collaboration between the Indian government, several Indian universities, three international corporations and 15 U.S. universities, including UW-Madison.

The cross-continental initiative aims to boost interdisciplinary collaborations between U.S. and Indian researchers, particularly in the realms of science and engineering.

At the heart of the "Indo-U.S. Inter-University Collaborative Initiative in Higher Education and Research" lies the promise of EDUSAT, India's first educational satellite, launched last year. Seeking to address chronic problems, such as the absence of educational infrastructure and good teachers in rural areas, EDUSAT will theoretically enable leading educators and researchers to deliver remote classroom lectures via satellite, to students in far-flung places.

"Any Indian village could set up a receiving station and receive a signal, and schools would need only a computer and a simple Web camera to view the lessons," says Sanjay Limaye, senior scientist at the UW-Madison Space Science and Engineering Center (SSEC).

The UW-Madison's particular contribution will be a focus on pre-college science education, says Limaye, who specializes in creating and promoting science education materials at UW-Madison. Limaye and Rosalyn Pertzborn, the director of the SSEC's office of Space Science Education, are both representing UW-Madison in India, alongside delegates from other U.S. universities.

Three multinational companies—Microsoft, Qualcomm and Cadence—are funding the India-U.S. initiative, says Limaye, with other corporations slated to join later. Specific programs and initiatives resulting from the India-U.S. agreement, Limaye adds, should come to light next year.

Other U.S. universities participating in the agreement include Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Purdue, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Washington, the University of California at both Santa Cruz and Los Angeles; the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; Georgia Institute of Technology, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; and the University of North Dakota.