

FLORIDA AGRICULTURAL AND MECHANICAL UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES AND AGREEMENTS

WHAT ARE INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES?

International linkages are long-term mutually-enriching relationships between two or more academic institutions, departments, schools or faculties. FAMU also administers large institutional development projects involving close cooperation between universities in the U.S. and one or more developing countries. These are highly structured and subject to guidelines set out by an external funding body such as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of State or U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Occasionally, non-academic institutions may be involved in such linkages if they can play a valid role in teaching, research or international development activities. Linkages often originate through informal faculty or staff contacts, but eventually evolve into formal agreements which may cover a variety of forms of cooperation. FAMU's Office of International Education and Development within the Division of Academic Affairs has established protocols to deal with international linkage possibilities.

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING INTERNATIONAL LINKAGES

- ▶ General FAMU policies and rules of conduct apply to all students, faculty, and staff while participating in a University exchange program. Both institutions involved should subscribe to the principle of academic freedom.
- ▶ While all exchanges are begun with the expectation that there will be continuing interest on the part of both institutions, all agreements should include a provision for review, for continuation or closure, every three to five years.
- ▶ Many exchanges operate under a principle of reciprocity. For faculty exchanges, this means that small, informal exchanges need not require external funding. Although there may be no cash outlay other than travel support, the in-kind contributions of office space and administrative support should be considered. For some student exchanges, the reciprocity principle involves each student paying the tuition of the home university. This tuition is "banked" to pay the tuition of the incoming international student. Because of the financial implications of an imbalance created by lack of student demand, there should be a clear and continuing need for any bilateral exchange program.

HOW ARE INTERNATIONAL LINKAGE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHED?

As mentioned previously, international linkages often originate through informal contact between faculty or staff at two or more institutions who share some form of common interest. For short-term projects or academic interactions of limited scope or duration, no formal linkage agreements are necessary. However, if there is sufficient interest, support, and potential for long-term interaction, then informal arrangements may evolve into formal international linkages.

All formal international linkages at FAMU are coordinated through and administered by the Office of International Education and Development. The Office of International Education and Development acts as a registry and clearinghouse for all FAMU's linkage agreements and provides assistance to faculty, departments, and colleges in developing international exchange relationships and agreements.

STEPS TO ESTABLISHING A SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL LINKAGE

If a FAMU faculty or staff member would like to establish an international linkage between FAMU and another institution, she or he must follow the steps below:

Step 1: Starting Out

She or he must and answer the following questions before proceeding:

- ▶ What is the degree of institutional commitment to a sustained linkage? There must be a strong base of grassroots support in the relevant academic and administrative units in order for the linkage to be effective.
- ▶ Will the linkage support the mission, needs and strengths of FAMU?
- ▶ Will FAMU's academic and research standards be maintained or enhanced as a result of the linkage?
- ▶ What are the existing personal contacts between the institutions that could form the basis of a linkage?
- ▶ To what degree is the linkage dependant upon the interests and activities of a small number of people? If the base of support is very small, then the linkage is likely to become inactive as personnel and interests change.
- ▶ Is the proposed partner located in a region of the world in which FAMU has a particular interest? Prior consultation with the Office of International Education and Development is strongly encouraged to learn about other existing interest/programs/linkages in related areas.
- ▶ Are there any natural affinities between the two institutions (size, historical ties, linguistically shared experiences, etc.)?
- ▶ What would be the financial implications of the proposed linkage for the institution? How will the linkage be funded? The potential for access to funding possibilities to support the proposed linkage activity should be considered and addressed. If funds, or a potential access to funds, are not likely to be available to support the relationship, a formal linkage should not be established.

Step 2: Establishing Informal Contacts

Informal contacts with institutions abroad may be made by faculty, staff, administrators, or alumni. These steps should be followed in making informal contact:

- ▶ Notify the Assistant Vice President for International Education and Development that informal contacts are being made with an institution abroad.
- ▶ Prior to going abroad to investigate linkage possibilities, write, telephone, or fax the appropriate senior institutional official (usually the rector or vice chancellor) for an appointment.
- ▶ Obtain a letter of introduction from the senior university administrators, as well as bring material about FAMU to exchange with prospective linkage partner.
- ▶ Subsequent to the visit abroad, develop a proposal to establish a linkage. The proposal should answer the questions stated in Step 1 above. Submit the proposal to and discuss it with the Assistant Vice President for International Education and Development.

Step 3: Negotiating the Linkage Agreement

- ▶ A clear and shared understanding of the benefits and objectives of the proposed linkage must be arrived at between the two institutions.
- ▶ Detailed preparation for the linkage should include input from and be based on the solid commitment of all FAMU units to be involved. This is particularly critical in the case of student exchanges, where the issue of mutual recognition of degree credits would have to be seriously addressed.
- ▶ The initial formal contact may be between the presidents or other senior administrators of both institutions.
- ▶ An individual with overall responsibility for the administration of the proposed linkage should be identified in the proposed partner institution. At FAMU, the Assistant Vice President for International Education and Development fulfills this role.
- ▶ Following the exchange of correspondence between the presidents/vice chancellors/rectors or their designees, the administrator would initiate contact with the counterpart in the partner institution. This contact would seek to develop in greater detail the parameters set out in the initial contact between presidents or senior administrators.
- ▶ A preparatory visit to or from the international partner, involving the administrator and/or faculty, may be deemed appropriate by both partners.

Step 3: The Agreement

- ▶ A written agreement should be prepared for signature by the president of each institution. **At FAMU, all international linkage agreements must be signed only by the president or provost.** Any agreement that is not signed by the FAMU president or provost is not a formal and does not commit the University.
- ▶ The agreement should contain the following provisions: mutual goals; definitions; a statement of who the expected participants are, and how many; payment of fees and other costs; mutual recognition of credits where student exchange is involved; responsibilities of each university; a clause providing for future rectification of weaknesses and problem areas in the agreement and renewal of the agreement subject to mutual satisfaction; a withdrawal clause (providing for advance notice).
- ▶ Before an agreement is presented to institutional leaders for signing, it must be reviewed by the FAMU Office of General Counsel. This might also be the case at the international partner institution. Once the General Counsel's Office has approved the agreement, the Office of International Education and Development will present it to the FAMU president for signature.
- ▶ Once the agreement has been signed by FAMU and the international partnering institution, one original will be sent to the international partner institution and a copy to the FAMU unit initiating the agreement process. The FAMU original copy will be maintained in the Office of International Education and Development.
- ▶ Regular contact between the institutions following signature of the agreement will help to ensure that the link will remain relevant, effective and free of serious problems.