

TAB B - Executive Summary

Title: “Addressing Environmental Obstacles to Developing a Market Economy Through a Partnership Program in Environmental Studies”

It is essential in a free market economy that the public be educated and regularly informed as changes and challenges occur. The public is entitled to have the power to influence the economy through a rational decision-making process. This empowerment must be based upon sound research coupled with strong educational programs.

One of the most serious impediments to the development of a free market economy in central Europe is environmental pollution. Many of the current environmental issues have their roots in the Cold War era. Environmentally imposed limits to economic growth and urban development challenge central European countries as they move towards integration into the European Union (EU). Improvements in these areas are prerequisites to establishing and maintaining a healthy democratic political system and a free enterprise economic system.

We propose a faculty exchange program with Hungary that initiates a permanent partnership between two universities, the Florida Institute of Technology (Florida Tech) and the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BUTE). This partnership will contribute directly to Hungary's efforts to confront urgent environmental problems and also to the region's efforts to achieve a market economy within the European Union. The proposed partnership will reinforce U.S. interests in the region by helping BUTE to educate the next generation of informed, active, and assertive consumers/citizens who make good trading partners. *Our proposed project will initially focus on faculty development and research in environmental studies.* It will gradually be expanded during the course of the 3-year period to include curriculum development, public outreach and student exchanges in these areas.

This project will form the basis for expansion of our collaboration to other academic, scientific and engineering disciplines. We anticipate that faculty members from BUTE will develop ongoing research and/or pedagogical collaborations that provide them directly with skills and materials readily incorporated into their courses and outreach programs. Faculty from Florida Tech will be in a better position to place their own research into a global frame of reference, and to revise and improve their curriculum in environmental studies. Also, by improving Internet communication between the universities and incorporating distance learning technology, continuation of the exchange is assured.

Our proposed collaboration is both timely and multidisciplinary in nature, involving faculty from the broadest possible spectrum of academic departments at Florida Tech and BUTE. Areas in which faculty participants have identified common interests related to the overarching theme of environmental studies include research projects, course work and/or degree options in:

- Biological Sciences— ecology, marine biology & conservation biology
- Business Management— environmental economics, eco-tourism
- Chemistry & Chemical Engineering— pollution abatement and waste management
- Civil Engineering— water resources & waste treatment
- Humanities— environmental ethics and environmental history
- Marine & Environmental Systems— environmental sciences & resource management
- Psychology— sociology & psychology of environmental decision-making
- Science & Mathematics Education— environmental education
- Science & Technology Studies— environmental policy