

Brazil Initiative-2006

More than two years ago, a number of MSU faculty whose outreach, research, and teaching focused on Brazil began to meet to discuss how we might take advantage of the unusually large numbers of Brazil experts on campus. We founded the Brazil Initiative, drew up a list of proposals, and began to put some of the less costly ones in place. Last summer, travel funds from ISP supplemented by funds from geography, political science, and history supported travel by members of the Brazil Initiative to explore establishing strategic partnerships with a number of Brazilian research universities.

Robert Walker (Geography) and Peter Beattie (Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies/History) visited the Universidade Federal Fluminense in Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro and the Universidade de São Paulo's Escola Superior de Agricultura Luis de Queiroz (ESALQ) in Piracicaba, São Paulo. Professor Walker already has research relationships with faculty at these institutions, and we explored ways to expand these partnerships for research and eventually dual degree programs centered on the use of GIS technology to study land use and the environment. Subsequently, the Brazil Initiative contacted MSU's new Director of Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, Professor Steven Pueppke who joined our faculty last January. Professor Pueppke also heads the MSU's new bioeconomy group. As a professor at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Professor Pueppke led student and research exchange programs with Universidade de São Paulo's ESALQ in Piracicaba where research and the bio-fuel industry is centered. We hope to combine Professor Walker and Pueppke's linkages with other professors in these areas of research to develop a cluster of research and curricular partnerships.

Professors Carlos Pereira (political science), Luís Araujo (economics), and Peter Beattie visited representatives of the Escola de Economia de São Paulo of the Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) to discuss ways to develop new research collaborations and curricular collaborations in the form of dual degrees related to the application of quantitative methods and theory in the areas of politics and economics. Professor Pereira is also a member of FGV's faculty

which facilitates this relationship. Moreover, MSU's history with the FGV (MSU faculty helped to develop the FGV's business administration program in the 1960s) make this partnership a natural. Professor Ana Paula Tostes (visiting professor of political science) along with Pereira, Araujo, and Beattie also visited the Universidade de São Paulo in São Paulo (USP-SP) to discuss collaborations in the areas of foreign relations and economic policy. Professor Tostes was a faculty member at USP-SP which will facilitate the development of relationships with this institution.

Professor Jonas Zoninsein (James Madison College) has been exploring relationships with the Universidade Federal de Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in three areas. The first would seek to establish research initiatives and student exchange that would lead to the development of dual degree programs in the areas of International Relations and International Political Economy. The second would be the development of UFRJ TV station and distance learning programs for Brazilian corporations. The third would be in the areas of renewable energies, as Brazil's largest Petroleum corporation, Petrobras, is headquartered in Rio de Janeiro and many of its researchers, engineers, and executives are trained at UFRJ and collaborate with that institution.

It is important to emphasize that each of the efforts mentioned above are at initial stages of development and that interested faculty, students, and community members are welcome to join in these already initiated programs or to forward new proposals. This Global Encounter: Brazil is intended to make space for broader involvement on the part of faculty, students, and the community to participate in the development of our strategic partnerships in Brazil. There is also potential to combine overlapping aspects of the partnerships noted above and to explore how programs developing in Brazil might work in collaboration with those being established in other world regions, especially those in the Portuguese-speaking world in Africa, Europe, and Asia.

*Summarized by Peter Beattie, Acting Director of Center for Latin America and Caribbean Studies-November, 2006

This material was generated from Global Encounter-Brazil, <<http://www.isp.msu.edu/globalencounter/brazil>>, held at Michigan State University on November 7, 2006. This interactive and participatory event was designed to obtain input and to elaborate in a country-specific forum on relevant themes, opportunities, issues, and opportunities affecting MSU's current and future engagement in Brazil (and to some degree Lusophone countries).