Forging ahead with its commitment to international collaboration, the Indiana University School of Education has formed a partnership with one of Europe's oldest and most respected universities, the University of Salamanca in Spain.

Signed in May, the cooperation plan between IU and the University of Salamanca School of Education is a groundbreaking initiative. The institutions plan to work together to advance mutual interests through the exchange of professors, students, and scholarly materials, as well as the initiation of joint research activities.

"We at the IU School of Education are extremely pleased to be working with the University of Salamanca in this way, and we look forward to a long and edifying partnership," says IU School of Education University Dean Donald Warren.

Collaboration between the two universities was first initiated in 1998, when IU President Myles Brand and University of Salamanca President Ignacio Berdugo signed a general agreement. At that time, the universities' music schools signed a specific partnership as well.

Face-to-face interaction is vital to any partnership, and members of IU's School of Education faculty traveled to Spain in November 1998. At that time, a delegation comprised of Donald Warren, Robert Arnove, Beatriz D'Ambrosio, and William Veal worked with the Spanish faculty to compose an initial draft of the partnership agreement. At that time, the universities' music schools signed a specific partnership as well.

University of Salamanca School of Education Dean José María Hernández Díaz (left) and IU School of Education University Dean Donald Warren discussed the school's partnership agreement with education faculty during the Spanish delegation's Bloomington visit in May. Indianapolis faculty members participated via video conferencing technology. (PHOTO BY: Nick Judy, IU Photographic Services)

Salamanca School of Education Dean José María Hernández Díaz and Professors Elena Sánchez and Leoncio Vega met with faculty, visited local public schools, and toured the campus and community. The group also met with Milagros Sánchez de la Blanca, director of the IU Spanish Resource Center, and Patrick O'Meara, dean for international programs.

At the heart of the partnership lies the exchange program. It is hoped that this initiative will strengthen teacher preparation in the two schools of education, thus contributing to improved educational policy in the United States and Spain. The student exchange program involves each institution nominating at least one student each year to visit the partner university for one academic semester.

A committee at each school, appointed by the deans, will select the exchange students. In time, both institutions hope to broaden the student exchanges to include shorter visits as well. Faculty exchanges will be named through a similar process, with professors expected to study and work according to a mutually agreed upon plan for professional development and research.

The selection of joint research projects continues while the two schools receive feedback from their faculty members. Although educational issues vary in both countries, the reform of teacher education is an interest shared by both.

"In Spain and the United States, teacher education is undergoing a fair amount of review and revision," says Warren. Within teacher education, Warren said the partnership will likely focus on math and science education, as well as special education and bilingual and multicultural education.

— Ceci Jones, School of Education