IU Aids Peace Process through U.S.–Macedonia Program

When the former Yugoslav Republic dissolved in the early 1990s, the newly independent country of Macedonia achieved a peaceful separation. However, in March 2001 long-standing grievances of the ethnic-Albanian minority (35 percent) in Macedonia erupted into violence.

One of many problems affecting relations between the ethnic Albanians and Macedonians is their disparate levels of education. Many fewer Albanians are enrolled in the National University of Cyril and Methodius, despite quotas set aside for them. A major reason often cited for this is that most ethnic Albanians receive their education in the Albanian rather than the Macedonian sector. This has contributed to a high dropout rate among Albanian students in the first few years of higher education. Thus in 2001, a key demand of ethnic Albanians was for a new university that would address the economic development needs of the Albanian minority and to improve access for Albanian students to higher education in Macedonia.

The response of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was to collaborate in the establishment of a multilingual, multiethnic South East European University (SEEU) in Tetovo, Macedonia, with instruction primarily in Albanian, Macedonian, and English. The success of this university will be a cornerstone of the ongoing peace process in Macedonia, mediated by the United States and the European Union.

In a competitive process, USAID and the Association Liaison Office for University Cooperation Development (ALO) selected Indiana University and the Indiana Consortium for International Programs (ICIP) in September 2001 to assist SEEU in establishing its curriculum and administrative structures. IU moved quickly and by early November had a team of five professionals in place in Tetovo to help SEEU initiate programs for English language training and computer literacy instruction. On November 20, SEEU held an inauguration ceremony to formally open its doors to its first enrollment cohort. Currently there are more than 900 students enrolled at SEEU; this is expected to increase to about 3,000 over the next four years.

SEEU's November inauguration was attended by a delegation from IU that included Michael McRobbie, vice president for information technology; Patrick O'Meara, dean for international programs; Emita Hill, chancellor emerita of IU Kokomo, lead consultant from the IU project team, and a member of the SEEU international and local boards; and Charles Reafsnyder, project director and associate dean for international programs.

Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, OSCE high commissioner on National Minorities, and His Excellency Max van der Stoel, personal envoy of the OSCE chairman-in-office and president of SEE University Foundation, addressed students and faculty during the ceremony.

Alajdin Abazi, rector of SEEU, offered these

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Paul Foster (left) and Ismail Mehmeti, head of the English-as-a-Second Language unit at SEEU.

remarks at the ceremony to emphasize the unique responsibility of SEEU in a region that has experienced a difficult conflict among its citizens: “Let the opportunities offered by the SEE University become the perspective of this city and this country, a perspective based on the principles of democracy, based on the respect of differences, on interethnic and interreligious tolerance.” In addition, McRobbie read a letter of greeting from Indiana University’s President Myles Brand, and Hill gave a short address.

Through this program, IU and the ICIP will offer assistance to the SEEU in the following areas:

- **Academic and instructional skills upgrading.** Three English-as-second language instructors, Gabrielle Goodwin, Henry Dixon, and Andrew Gridinsky, and one computer literacy instructor, Robert Downey, arrived on-site in November 2001 to develop curriculum, train counterpart local instructors, and conduct classes for faculty, staff, and students.

- **Faculty and curriculum development.** Five faculty curriculum specialists will travel to SEEU during the spring and summer of 2002 to introduce new teaching pedagogies and assist in the development of SEEU’s curriculum and course syllabi. The fields include law, business, computer and information science, education, and public administration. In March through April of 2002, these individuals included Jerry Wheat (Business, IU Southeast); Edward Queen II (a recent graduate of the School of Law—Indianapolis); Terry Mason (Education, IUB); John Parrish-Sprowl (Communication Studies, IUPUI); and David Jones (Public Administration, IUPUI). From 2002–2004, nine more IU/ICIP faculty will conduct three-week graduate seminars for faculty development.

- **SEEU administrative support.** IU’s on-site partnership manager, Paul Foster, is providing academic guidance and administrative expertise. Chancellor Emerita Hill will make visits to SEEU in each of the three years of the grant. Over the life of the grant, up to nine SEEU administrators will travel to Indiana for four-week mentoring and hands-on internships related to institutional development and financial management.

- **Library development.** An IU library acquisitions specialist, Robert Goehlert (IU Libraries, IUB), will assist SEEU in developing an acquisitions plan. One SEEU librarian will travel to the United States for a four-week internship. To augment the SEEU’s library resources, IU/ICIP institutions have arranged for the shipment of 30,000 recent-edition text and reference books from the Sabre Foundation.

Through these project activities, the U.S.–Macedonia Linkage Program will help to establish a viable university program capable of training students who can meet the needs of the Macedonian work force. IU and ICIP faculty and departments will benefit from the exchange in three ways: they will gain opportunities for teaching and research in topics relating to Macedonia and the Balkans, bring regional expertise from SEEU via Internet video conferencing into ICIP classrooms, and observe firsthand the institutional development process that a new university must address in meeting critical social and economic needs.

—Charles Reafsnyder
Associate Dean, International Programs

For views of the university: www.see-university.com/english/general/gallery.html