

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Four organizations with a significant commitment to making sustainability a major focus in higher education hereby reconfirm the “Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership (GHESP)”, namely:

- Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future (ULSF);
- COPERNICUS-CAMPUS;
- International Association of Universities (IAU); and
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

As a World Summit on Sustainable Development Type II Partnership, GHESP will combine the strengths of its individual partners in an effort to mobilize universities and higher education institutions to support sustainable development:

- ULSF serves as Secretariat for over 290 signatories of the *Talloires Declaration* in over 40 countries and promotes education for sustainability based on The Earth Charter;
- COPERNICUS-CAMPUS is responsible for the *University Charter for Sustainable Development*, signed to date by over 305 university heads in 37 European countries;
- IAU provides an international centre of cooperation among over 650 member universities and institutions of higher education which have formally adopted the *Kyoto Declaration*;
- UNESCO is the task manager for the implementation of Chapter 36, “Education, Public Awareness and Training,” of Agenda 21 and for the international work programme on education of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as the convenor in 1998 of the World Conference on Higher Education, both of which have called for the renewal of higher education to address the complex societal challenges of the 21st century.

The rationale for the partnership is the consensus that higher education must play a central role within the overall process of achieving sustainable development. The partners are convinced that the leaders of higher education institutions and their academic colleagues in all disciplines must make sustainable development a central academic and organizational focus in order to create a just, equitable and ecologically sound future. This requires the generation and dissemination of knowledge through interdisciplinary research and teaching, policy-making, capacity building, and technology transfer. It is critical that higher education institutions understand and accept their responsibility within the broader context of social and economic development, and the building of democratic, equitable and ecologically minded societies.

The overall goal of GHESP is to create a global learning space for higher education for sustainable development based on cooperation and exchange of good practice between institutions throughout the world. This is particularly relevant as we move forward from the World Summit on Sustainable Development and prepare for renewed focus on education with the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development beginning in 2005.

The objectives of the partnership are to:

1. Promote better understanding, and more effective implementation of strategies for the incorporation of sustainable development in universities and other higher education institutions, beginning with the over 1,000 signatories of the charters and declarations sponsored by the partner organizations. Emphasis is put on the need for interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and research;

2. Identify, share and disseminate widely, via internet, in print, through seminars and other venues, effective strategies, models and good practices for promoting higher education for sustainable development (HESD);
3. Make recommendations on HESD based on the partnership's research and review and in consultation with key stakeholders from North and South, including business, governments, other UN bodies such as the UNU, as well as other relevant non-governmental organizations;
4. Demonstrate that it is possible to form a partnership of non-governmental organizations working closely with the UN system to develop and implement a joint action plan addressed to achieve common goals; and analyse and evaluate this experience as an international demonstration project.

In order to achieve the objectives outlined above, the partners will undertake a number of collaborative activities, such as international consultations and conferences, good practice inventories, publications, and website development. These target activities are specifically stated in the Lüneburg Declaration on Higher Education for Sustainable Development (October 2001), the first joint policy statement of GHESP addressed to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

An annually updated GHESP Action Plan, drawn up and discussed by all partners, will serve to set priorities and monitor progress made. The Action Plan will be considered an integral part of the MOU. GHESP will meet at least once each year. The Chair will rotate after 12 months, preparing a brief report on GHESP activities and passing this onto the new Chair at the end of the cycle.

ULSF, COPERNICUS-CAMPUS, and IAU will each draw on its own experience and on-going work to help advance the goals of the partnership. The role of UNESCO is primarily to act as facilitator for the collaborative work of the partners; provide further international context and input; and make use of and promote the outputs of the group to further innovation and international cooperation in this field.

The partnership shall continue upon signing by all parties of this Memorandum of Understanding and shall remain in effect until the end of 2007. At that time, the composition and continuation of the partnership shall be reviewed based on an evaluation of the achievements made.

This document was adopted by the four partners at the GHESP Meeting IAU organised in September 2002, in Quebec City.