

First APLU Faculty Fellow

Following a rigorous national competition, the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (since renamed the Association of Public & Land Grant Universities, or APLU) awarded its first faculty fellowship to a member of the University of Montana faculty. Peter Koehn spent fall semester 2007 in residence at the APLU office in Washington, D.C. APLU, the nation's oldest higher-education association, has a membership of 218 universities from all 50 states and the U.S. territories.

Koehn worked closely with Kerry Bolognese, then Vice President of APLU's International Programs Division. During his time at APLU, he initiated a database of international research and development projects at member universities across the country. The American Association of Universities (AAU) joined the database project in 2008. About 800 projects are now profiled on the database.

APLU launched the International Research and Development Project Database (IRDPD) to accomplish a number of goals: (1) to profile the international research and service involvements of member universities; (2) to enhance APLU's ability to respond to inquiries from Capitol Hill, executive agencies of the U.S. national government, embassies, the media, and the attentive public about the overseas presence, expertise, and contributions of member higher-education institutions; (3) to facilitate consortia-building; (4) to provide an information resource base in support of initiatives to support African higher education and the involvement of U.S. institutions in sustainable development; and (5) to enable APLU to compile reports detailing the scope of member university involvement in international research and development. The dimensions covered include the lead institution's name, the project title, web page and primary contact's e-mail address; the project location; the field(s) of expertise; types of activities conducted; overseas partners (type and name); year of commencement and expected completion; funding sources and amounts; the impetus for the project; and details of participant training. The IRDPD can be searched by individual country, broad fields of expertise, and activities identified by the reporting project director.

Following the fellowship period, Vice President Bolognese reported that in a short period of time, "Peter developed a loosely conceptualized database project into a well-designed major long-term NASULGC initiative ... that provides a more detailed and complete overview than has ever existed." After Peter's fellowships period ended, moreover, APLU continued "to engage him and rely on his counsel in expanding the database, engaging additional institutions and giving it wider visibility."

In October 2008, APLU President Peter McPherson reported that the database "is regularly consulted by universities, funding agencies, and congressional staffers," that it has become "the authoritative source for those seeking information about such projects," and that "the database has helped develop a wider and deeper understanding among the press, general public, and policy makers at state and national levels [regarding] how higher education institutions promote international development and engage in international community service."