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IIE Launched Myanmar Higher Education Initiative

9 U.S. Universities Join to Develop Academic Partnerships and Rebuild Higher Education Capacity in Myanmar

NEW YORK, November 20, 2012 – Following on the heels of President Obama's historic trip to Myanmar this week and his stated commitment to advance education, the Institute of International Education has launched an institute-wide initiative involving the participation of nine U.S. higher education institutions in a strategic planning process for developing institutional partnerships with universities in Myanmar and to assist in rebuilding higher education capacity in the country.

The nine U.S. colleges and universities that will be part of the 2012 Myanmar initiative of the International Academic Partnership Program (IAPP) were announced today.

The participating U.S. campuses are: American University, Arizona State University, Ball State University, Hawaii Pacific University, Northern Illinois University, Northern Arizona University, Samford University, University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and University of Washington.

IIE's Center for International Partnerships in Higher Education, which administers IAPP, selected the nine schools based on successful applications that outlined their strong ability to develop linkages with institutions in Myanmar and their interest in providing capacity building services.

In contrast to previous IAPP programs on Brazil, China and India, the institutions selected for IAPP Myanmar have fairly significant experience with the country, whether through diaspora students and faculty on their campuses or through previous work in the country, and the initiative is broader in scope than the previous partnership programs.

Over the next six months, the initiative will take a multi-pronged approach aimed at helping each institution build partnerships with institutions in Myanmar, while also helping the country rebuild its higher education capacity.

The initiative will include a series of bi-national conference calls in December about higher education in Myanmar. IIE will arrange the conference call and invite institutions from its 1,100-member IIENetwork to join.

Also part of the initiative is a partnership-focused delegation that will head to Myanmar in February 2013, led by IIE president and CEO, Allan Goodman. U.S. university faculty and administrators will be part of this weeklong capacity-building mission. While in Myanmar, the IIE-led delegation will hold public workshops at a number of universities in Yangon and Mandalay open to anyone

interested in learning from the U.S. representatives as they lecture on topics such as accreditation, quality assurance, faculty development, student learning, partnerships, and other critical subjects.

Following the workshops, closed "listening" sessions will be held, open only to Myanmar university representatives to talk with the U.S. delegation about their specific needs and priorities. The findings of the delegation will then be highlighted in a report on the higher education needs in Myanmar.

An advisory board consisting of several distinguished experts will play a key role in guiding the Myanmar Initiative. The board members include Priscilla Clapp, retired Minister-Counselor, U.S. Foreign Service and Senior Advisor at the Asia Society, Suzanne DiMaggio, Vice President, Global Policy Programs with the Asia Society, Zachary Klim, associate director of Academic Initiatives and Global Programs, New York University and Robert Rotberg, former Director of the Program on Intrastate Conflict (1999-2010) at John F. Kennedy School of Government Harvard University and former President Emeritus, World Peace Foundation.

The launch of the 2012 IAPP Myanmar program marks the Center's first Special Partnership Initiative, which entails an adjusted program focus for countries in transition or emerging from recent conflict, and acknowledges a different set of expectations with which institutions need to enter partnerships.

While the end goal of all partnerships should be mutual benefit, equal exchange of students and faculty, and other reciprocal activities, this initiative recognizes that higher education institutions in Myanmar first need assistance in rebuilding before embarking upon the type of institutional partnerships seen with Brazilian, Indian, or Chinese institutions.

At a recent address at the Asia Society during the UN General Assembly, President U Their Sein discussed the critical role of civil society in maintaining a democratic and harmonious society, and cited more US-Myanmar collaboration as a vehicle for much-needed human capacity development.

President Thein Sein pledged in his inauguration speech last year to improve education and seek foreign expertise to lift standards to international levels. The government has increased the country's education budget from \$340 million to \$740 million this year, and has begun to implement wideranging reforms.

With the ease of export sanctions as just one of several recent actions demonstrating U.S. good will towards Myanmar, this is a crucial time to begin increasing academic collaboration between the two countries.

According to the *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*, published annually by IIE with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, 796 Myanmar students studied in the U.S. in the academic year 2010/11, a 14.5 percent increase from the previous year. Fewer than 100 U.S. students studied abroad in Myanmar in 2009/10. However, these numbers are expected to increase as the country continues to open up to the world.

Since the inception of the program in 2009, IIE's Center for International Partnerships has worked with over 50 U.S. colleges and universities to foster sustainable linkages with Brazil, China, and India. As a result of the program, previous participating institutions have developed focused partnerships with counterparts in their particular focus country, engaging in partnership activities

such as faculty exchange, student exchange, study abroad programs, joint research, and joint conferences.

Through face-to-face contact, training workshops, and public forums, the IAPP Myanmar program aims to foster similar partnership activities, in addition to sharing practical skills that will contribute to the reconstruction of what was once considered one of Asia's stronger higher education systems.

For more information about past IAPP programs, visit: www.iie.org/iapp

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