

Press Release

HORTiculture in EC and US

“HORTECUS”

With joint grants from the U. S. Department of Education and the European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture; the Horticulture Departments at Purdue University, Alabama A&M University, and Oklahoma State University in the United States will form a consortium with the Horticulture Departments at The Technological Educational Institute of Crete in Greece, Hogeschool Delft in the Netherlands, The Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University (KVL) in Denmark, and the University of Hannover in Germany for the exchange of faculty and students. Professor Allen Hammer at Purdue will lead the U. S. partners which include Professor Douglas Needham at Oklahoma State and Professor Caula Beyl at AAMU. Professor Ioannis Vlahos at Crete will lead the European partners, which include Professor Skytt Andersen at KVL, Professor Henk Fuchs at Delft, and Professor Hartmut Stuetzel at Hannover.

The program will establish academic links through student and faculty mobility among the members of the consortium in the fields of horticulture, including but not limited to floriculture, turfgrass management, public garden management, plant breeding, and preservation of biodiversity. The participating universities on both sides of the Atlantic are all taking an active role in the internationalization of their curricula and seek to expand their horticultural contacts on a global scale. In addition to their combination of language and cultural diversity, the cooperating educational institutions' geographical locations provide a unique palette of horticultural industries, and thus experiential opportunities, for exchange students and faculty to interact.

Horticultural crop breeding, production, post-harvest handling, processing, and marketing are increasingly important industries that have transcended national frontiers and become international businesses. With the removal of national trade barriers and the expansion of membership, the European Union has become a major economic force with community policies affecting this large horticultural market. Individual horticultural businesses are expanding their production centers into numerous

member states with horticultural products marketed throughout the EU. A similar situation exists in the United States where, long before European member states opened their borders, the interstate cooperation has thrived in all areas of agricultural production and distribution. The consortium will provide an ideal opportunity for young people majoring in horticulture to learn about horticulture on both sides of the Atlantic. Faculty exchange will provide an opportunity for lecture in the foreign classroom and/or to organize short courses on horticultural topics of current importance for the place bound students at their home institution. The consortium universities will also develop a web-based course on International Horticulture that will be opened to horticulture students around the world. The expertise of this consortium group will be used to develop a course with content and delivery superior to that which could be developed by one institution alone.

The grants provide support for faculty travel, material development, course development, student recruitment, language training, and student travel scholarships over a three-year period. Horticulture industries around the world will gain much from this grant-supported program, as horticulture graduates will acquire first hand international experience as part of their university education.