

**PROGRAMA FOR A GREATER CARIBBEAN REGION ENGINEERING ACCREDITATION SYSTEM
(GCREAS)**

Organizational Meeting , July 7-8, 2008

I. PLACE AND PARTICIPANTS

- 1.1 During the said dates, in the offices of the President of the *Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá (UTP)*, a series of meetings took place with the presence of the following participants: Ing. Marcela Paredes, President of UTP; Dr. Miguel Escala, Rector of *Instituto Tecnológico de Santo Domingo (INTEC)*; L. Garth Kiddoe, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Management at the *University of Technology*, Jamaica; Ing. Jorge Vélez, Rector of the *University of Puerto Rico*, Mayagüez campus; Ing. Martín Candanedo, Vice-president for Research, Graduate Students & Continued education at UTP; Lic. Delva de Chambers, Director for Planning at UTP; Lic. Brenda Pinzón, Chief of University Accreditation at UTP, Deborah Wolfe, P. Eng. Director of Education, Outreach & Research for *Engineers Canada*, and Hugo Pirela Ph.D. GCREAS Program Coordinator at INTEC.
- 1.2 The participants were appropriate representatives of the GCREAS Program's main stakeholders as those designated in the approved IADB documentation, including relevant institutions of the three "founding countries" of Panama, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, plus the engineering accreditation agency of Canada

II. PURPOSE & AGENDA

- 2.1 The meeting was convened as a start up of the Program's activities and its basic focus was to review the Program goals, structure, schedule, expected results chain and time schedule. Another aim of the meeting was to reach basic understandings and agreements on the organizational process involved, according to the following general agenda:

July 7

Arrival to Panamá, transportation to Hotel "El Panamá"

2:00 p.m. Initial meeting at Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá

- Presentation of participants (UTP Rector & associates, INTEC Rector & associates, Representative from Jamaica, Program Coordinator, Guests.)
- Review of meeting agenda
- Presentation of program and main benchmarks per year.
- Discussion with representatives and guests

July 8

8: 30 a.m. Transportation from Hotel to Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá

9:00 a.m. Work session on the Programs Operation Plan. Review and discussion of each country's activities and commitments (Country coordinator, country representatives, guests).

- 2.2 During the one and a half day allocated for discussions, the agenda was successfully covered. The gathered reviewed step by step all programs features, expected results and necessary commitments from each of the stakeholders involved. (See program structure & components, as well as a detailed activities diagram, attached to the present document) The participants reached important agreements on the several issues discussed. The following were the main points covered during the proceedings.

III. MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND ACCORDS

A. Creation of the International Steering Committee

- 3.1 According to program stipulations, the decision was adopted to formally launch the process to designate an *International Steering Committee* (ISC) for the Program. The ISC will deliberate and decide on all fundamental matters concerning the Program main mission and will oversee the operation of the Executing Agency (INTEC) with the aim of guiding the general direction of activities and promoting the quality of the Program's results chain.

1. Committee structure

- 3.2 The decision was made that the International Steering Committee (ISC) of the Program would have seventeen members, according to the following composition:
- 1 representative from the National Authorities in charge of Education, or Science and Technology in each of the three founding countries (Panama, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic)
 - 1 representative from the institutions of higher learning offering engineering programs in each of the founding countries
 - 1 representative from accreditation institutions in each of the founding countries
 - 1 representative from professional associations/licensing bodies in each of the founding countries
 - 1 representative from the entrepreneurial private sector in each of the founding countries
 - 1 representative from the accreditation bodies in USA or Canada
 - 1 representative from the private stakeholders spearheading the initiative for the program from the beginning (Engineering for the Americas, EftA or Hewlett Packard, HP)
- 3.3 The five representatives of each country will form a *National Steering Committee* that will deliberate for the country as a whole on all program matters and decisions. The National Steering Committee could be expanded for deliberation purposes, according to

need. Among the five full members, a person will be chosen to be a “focal point” for purposes of international liaison.

- 3.4 The three focal point members will form an *Executive Committee* that will act in the name of the full ISC in what concerns operational matters such as meeting organization, logistics, consultation for adjudication of works for the Program, etc.
- 3.5 The ISC will be presided over by the Rector of INTEC, the executing agency of the Program designated by IADB as the direct manager of resources allocated in the operation.

2. Additional ISC members

- 3.6 Representatives from countries that wish to sign on the Program, other than the “founding countries”, may be accepted as full members of the ISC, provided such countries comply with the conditions for membership, as stipulated by the original ISC.
- 3.7 The ISC will generally decide on issues by consensus, yet in absence of that will proceed on the basis of a simple majority. In case new members are accepted and there is an even number of votes, the chairperson will have a casting vote.

3. Designation procedure

- 3.8 The meeting agreed to start in each country an organizational process, consisting of preparatory meetings with members of each of the five communities that would designate representatives to the ISC. The Program Coordinator, Dr. Hugo Pirela, will be available to help in fomenting these preparatory meetings, including one trip to the country to help with the initial induction of the five national delegates to the ISC.
- 3.8 The following were designated as “ad hoc” members of a kick off committee to be in charge of these preparatory meetings, in cooperation with the Program Coordinator: Ing. Garth Kiddoe, for Jamaica; and Ing. Martín Candanedo, for Panamá.
- 3.9 Once all national designation processes are complete, a first regional meeting will be convened in Kingston, Jamaica, where the ISC will be formally set up and actual deliberation will start.

B. Base study for the GCREAS

- 3.10 The terms of reference (ToR) for the base study stipulated by the Program as the main background for the ISC deliberation, was reviewed and revised to enhance clarity of what is intended. It was agreed that upon completing the final revision, the Program Coordinator will send the ToR to Deborah Wolfe, for further distribution to, and

consultation within, the Washington Accord (WA) community. The aim will be to gather relevant names and establish a list of eligible candidates to perform the study.

- 3.11 Given the crucial nature of the base study for the entire program, it was decided that beside requesting and comparing resumes, the bidding process for the study will include the request for a small proposal, to include a methodology and an abstract about the candidate's experience on the field. In this context, Deborah Wolfe provided examples of Requests for Proposals (r.f.p.), which will be finessed by the Program Coordinator for use during the bidding process.
- 3.12 It was decided that in what concerns the analysis of existing engineering accreditation systems the study should mainly focus on presenting critical comparisons and contrasting of systems, and not necessarily dwell on issues of feasibility of systems; for these would be up to the ISC to discuss and decide upon, in the context of the region.
- 3.13 It was decided that the consultant will be asked to submit an advance report for the ISC to consider at the first regional meeting, for members to begin chewing on preliminary results and features of the future system; as well as feeding back to the consultant on the direction of the study. It was also decided that the first regional meeting be facilitated by the consultant, in the presence of delegates from accreditation agencies in Canada and USA who will act as mentors.
- 3.14 Deborah Wolfe suggested that the study should include conducting focus groups in Asia, the Caribbean and USA/Canada, to get insights on the initial stages of developing an engineering accreditation system and the experience thereof. She also suggested that the three mature systems to study should include Australia, Canada & USA; and that the recently developed ones to be studied should be Taiwan plus Singapore or Korea.

C. Outreach & coordination

- 3.15 Both because of program stipulations and because of the need to expand the base of legitimacy and sustainability, the meeting recognized the importance of outreach and coordination with institutions in countries other than the GCREAS "founding countries". The need is recognized to get as many countries as possible, to sign on as soon as possible, into the system. The meeting also recognized that, given the critical mass needed for self-sustainability, the fact that GCREAS and the *Central American Association for Accreditation in Architecture and Engineering* (ACAAI) would be overlapping systems, this might create possible issues of competition between the two for the support of the central American countries.
- 3.16 The general consensus of the meeting was that: (i) regardless of what the future international arrangements might result from market conditions and constraints, the coordination and sharing of information between the two systems/programs might be generally beneficial to both; (ii) while maintaining a policy of open doors toward ACAAI,

it would be best for the GCREAS program to strengthen the Caribbean elements and body of the system first and then worry about coordination with other bodies in central America.

- 3.17 Outreach in the Caribbean area should give particular priority to countries like Venezuela and Trinidad & Tobago. It was considered advisable for the GCREAS representation in Jamaica to invite T&T to a sensitization exercise on the benefits of the Program, which are included in the schedule discussed, to be followed by a visit by the Program Coordinator. A letter should also be addressed to Venezuelan relevant institutions to invite them to join the GCREAS effort.
- 3.18 It was agreed that additional members from countries other than GCREAS “founding countries” could be accepted as long as they cover the expenses required to organize and attend meetings, and accreditation exercises. In return, the joining of GCREAS should imply a number of benefits for the joining country, such as:
- (i) Access to modeling of accreditation systems appropriate to countries in the region, through the developing and discussion of the base study to be funded by GCREAS.
 - (ii) Access to modeling of funding mechanism for the system, based on the same study.
 - (iii) Access to on line training on accreditation processes funded by GCREAS (All these three conveniences would be guaranteed by the new country’s access to a *members only* section of the Program website.
 - (iv) Access to pilot accreditation
 - (v) Access to participation on internal discussions and decision-making to shape the system itself, by joining the ISC.
- 3.19 The outreach effort should include clarification of what the additional countries need to budget in order to sign on GCREAS program. The outreach effort should also benefit from pointers developed for the sensitization exercises, such as: international demand for quality engineers; need for international recognition; etc. It was considered that the experience in Taiwan, Korea may provide tips for sensitization exercise.
- 3.20 To consolidate the outreach effort it was also suggested that the final ISC meeting, stipulated in the Program schedule, can be transformed into a *Greater Caribbean Conference on Accreditation* inviting more people from each country, to further expand the system base

D. Pilot accreditation and sundry issues

- 3.21 Looking forward to the pilot accreditation phase stipulated in the Program schedule, it was suggested that one accreditation per year per country would be the appropriate accreditation for GCREAS at that point. The GCREAS implementation plan, also stipulated in the Program schedule, should include in turn a schedule of accreditations per year, with agreements on which institutions will be subject to the pilot accreditation process.

- 3.22 It was considered advisable to decide, early, what legal form (incorporation) would be adopted for GCREAS. Consultation with Marianela Aguilar, Executive Director of the CCA) on how they set up their 7 countries system was advised, because of her detailed knowledge about the whole process. In general, the need was stressed to take note of incorporation laws and regulations in each country, and then incorporate GCREAS in such a way as to be legal in all countries involved. It was also noted that GCREAS may need an additional budget line for this legal determination.
- 3.23 Deborah Wolfe informed of possible incoming changes in the EftA board, at the initiative of OAS. It was considered convenient for GCREAS to address a letter to EftA recognizing the volunteer work done for the inception of the Program. She also announced that the 2009 WA meeting in Japan will take place on June 15 – 19.

Dr. Miguel Escala
INTEC Rector

Dr. Hugo Pirela
GCREAS Project Coordinator