Utilizing Distance Education Technologies: The International Potato Center (CIP) and the Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University (TAMU)

Theresa Pesl Murphrey, Texas A&M University
Patricio Malagamba, International Potato Center
James R. Lindner, Texas A&M University

Introduction
Technology is offering new ways to enhance teaching and learning effectiveness, meet the needs of learners, and reach broader audiences. The exploration of how to best use the technology to do this is a continuous process as the technology continues to change and advance. The Department of Agricultural Education at Texas A&M University (TAMU) and the International Potato Center (CIP) formed a collaborative partnership in 1999 aimed at more effectively providing knowledge and learning experiences to developing countries. The collaborative partnership was formed to build the capacity within CIP to provide rapid, modern, and appropriate learning delivery systems to its developing country partners by drawing on the expertise within TAMU for distance learning technology/delivery and content-related expertise.

Purpose
This poster presentation describes the activities that have resulted from collaboration between TAMU and CIP, the steps taken to build capacity within the partners, and steps that are planned for the future. Further, the poster describes lessons learned throughout the collaboration that can benefit institutions and individuals interested in using technology to facilitate learning.

Major Activities to be Shared
The CIP/TAMU collaboration focuses on pursuing effective use of distance education technologies. The partners utilize distance education technologies to better carry out research and disseminate outcomes in timely and effective ways. Joint collaboration encourages the evaluation of appropriate use of distance education technologies as partners strive to serve as a leader in the field of technology-assisted-learning at a distance and in the traditional classroom. Activities to be described in the poster include:

- Capacity Building Activities
- Training/Education Activities
- Administrative Activities

Conclusions and Educational Importance
The objective of the program is to expand efforts beyond the CIP/TAMU collaboration and enable other centers to benefit from the lessons learned. Engaging the interest of the different centers of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and of US Universities could provide a mechanism for rapid progress in closing the communication and learning divide that is threatening agricultural and economic development in countries of Africa, Latin America, Asia and Central and Eastern Europe. The importance of this project relates to the network of linkages to be established with other universities and CGIAR centers to build on the original experience and formation of a consortium to quickly move forward in the efficient delivery of information with technology-assisted-learning. Closing the digital divide is essential to promoting incomes for poverty eradication and for market development. Increasing rural income, by providing new technologies and market opportunities, is a major (the only) sustainable path to poverty eradication. Collaboration is the key to successful implementation of the process.