International Higher Education Loan Program:
A Partnership for International Education in Agriculture

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Introduction and Purpose
As the world’s population continues to increase and as pressure on natural resources and resource allocation grows, there is a pressing need for expanding the supply of trained professionals in the area of sustainable agricultural development. These individuals can help improve agricultural practices, spread information about new methods of agriculture, and assist the development of and changeover to market agricultural economics – all of which hold the promise of increased food and fiber production, improved distribution, increased agricultural incomes, and hence increased food security for all people of the world.

Throughout the world, there is a basic faith in the power of education to solve problems. Higher education can provide the future intellectual capital necessary to spark positive growth in a country. In particular, agricultural higher education can provide the critical difference in whether we can meet the needs of an increasing world population or face serious threats to food security across the world. The Global Consortium of Higher Education and Research in Agriculture (GCHERA), consisting of more than 400 institutions in more than 130 countries on six continents, has endorsed the establishment of the International Higher Education Loan Program (I-HELP). I-HELP provides loans for junior faculty and graduate students from throughout the developing world to study at higher education institutions recognized as leaders in agricultural higher education. As loans are repaid, those funds are used to fund future Fellows. During its first-year pilot program phase in 2000, nineteen Fellows from twelve countries were placed at Iowa State University for one semester. In 2001, sixteen Fellows from nine countries participated in programs at Iowa State University and Purdue University.

Methods and Information to be Shared
Iowa State University has been charged with taking the lead in developing and administering I-HELP on behalf of GCHERA to ensure a valuable education and to assist in developing individual leadership capacity for participants from all parts of the world. A comprehensive organizational plan has been developed for the selection and placement of participants and for the logistical and financial administration of the program. The purpose of the poster presentation will be to share the model developed by Iowa State University for I-HELP, including:

• the application and selection process,
• program development activities including strengthening leadership capacity,
• the loan repayment model which forgives 50 percent of the loan for Fellows who return to their country of origin and engage in activities that directly support the improvement of higher education and/or contribute directly to food security and environmental sustainability.

In addition, the poster will provide a visual presentation of selected I-HELP Fellows, the areas of study in which the Fellows were engaged during their 12-week program in the U.S., and examples of how the knowledge they acquired in the U.S. is being used in their home countries to improve agricultural education and/or food security and environmental sustainability. The opportunity to present this poster in Durban, South Africa, is particularly timely since two Fellows from Mangosuthu Technikon in Durban plan to participate in the conference.

Educational Importance
The I-HELP program is built on the assumption individuals and their families are best equipped to make serious human capital investments in their communities/development. I-HELP will give individuals from developing countries access to credit resources, allowing them to invest in their own education. Not only is individual human capacity expanded, but as the individual’s sphere