FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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UF Receives U.S. Department of Education Grant for $399,385 to Improve Tourism Education, Research, and Industry Outreach in Russia

GAINESVILLE, Fla. – Tourism is the largest and fastest growing industry in the world with a greater number of people traveling both domestically and internationally than ever before. The Russian Federation is a major tourism market with over 20.6 million in international arrivals that account for $11.94 billion in international tourism receipts. The domestic market within Russia also accounts for a major economic impact to the economy with significant potential for further growth.

There have been a limited number of institutions in Russia that have focused on tourism related curriculum. Given the current influx of visitors and the development of destinations and attractions in Russia, there is a great need for tourism education. The U.S. Department of Education has given the University of Florida’s Department of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management in conjunction with the Russian Studies Program, U.S., the monumental opportunity to form a partnership with the State University of Nizhni Novgorod (UNN), Russian Federation.

The main goal of this project is to build capacity to improve tourism curriculum, research, and industry outreach through collaboration between academic institutions and the private sector. In addition, the partners will engage in collaborative research initiatives and participate in industry outreach via the proposed Center for Tourism Management at UNN, which is likely to be the first university-associated tourism research center.

“Overall, capacity building and institutional development in tourism education are a fundamental component for the vitality and sustainability of the industry in Russia. Hence, a primary effort will need to be instituted in developing a qualified, trained, and skilled labor force,” according to Dr. Svetlana Stepchenkova, Assistant Professor of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management at UF. “More importantly, a close working partnership by universities with the hospitality and tourism industry is needed to identify and develop skills. This project offers the key opportunity to create a synergistic partnership between the University of Florida and the State University of Nizhni Novgorod to strengthen tourism education, training, research, and industry outreach in Nizhni Novgorod,” said Dr. Lori Pennington-Gray, Associate Professor of Tourism, Recreation and Sport Management and Director of the Tourism Crisis Management Institute at UF.

The UF team includes: Dr. Svetlana Stepchenkova, Dr. Lori Pennington-Gray, Dr. Brijesh Thapa, and Dr. Michael Gorham.

The three year project will begin in September 2010.

For more information, please visit www.tourismcrisis.com or contact Svetlana Stepchenkova at (352) 392-4042 x1411, svtlana.step@hhp.ufl.edu.