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## Uncovering Resources for Your International Extension Experience

Debra Minar Driscoll

Oregon State University Extension Service, [debra.driscoll@oregonstate.edu](mailto:debra.driscoll@oregonstate.edu)



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## Uncovering Resources for Your International Extension Experience

### Abstract

Resources for international Extension experiences are available on the national Extension association's Web page described in this article. Ideas that state Extension associations can use to assist their Extension workers in planning their own international experiences are also highlighted.

### Debra Minar Driscoll

Family and Community Education Faculty  
Oregon State University Extension Service  
Dallas, Oregon  
Internet Address: [debra.driscoll@oregonstate.edu](mailto:debra.driscoll@oregonstate.edu)

Are you an Extension professional who's interested in developing your plans for an international experience? You may already have a concept of what you would like to do and where you would like to do it. This article describes a Web page that can help to bring your dream several steps closer to reality and offers ideas for increasing global networking in your state.

### The National Organization Connection

Did you know that the national Extension fraternal organization, Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP), has a Global Relations committee? As a former (2000-2001) and future (2003) member of this committee, I know that ESP is unique among Extension professional organizations in promoting international work across all program areas. (To see the Global Relations committee's plan of work, go to <http://www.espnational.org/> and click on "National Committees.")

A long-range goal of the committee is to establish an international database on the ESP Web site's Global Relations link. As a start toward this goal, there is a new Global Relations Link Web page <http://www.uwyo.edu/ces/esp/espinternational.htm> that shows links to organizations providing international opportunities for Extension professionals.

Organizations currently on this page include:

- Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE);
- Winrock International;
- Agricultural Cooperative Development International/ Volunteers In Overseas Cooperative Assistance (ACDI/VOCA);
- The Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs, Inc.;
- Idealist Action without Borders, Inc.;
- Land O' Lakes International Development; Partners of the Americas;
- The United States Agency for International Development (USAID); and
- The USDA/CSREES International Programs Office.

One link I found particularly interesting was the Idealist Action without Borders site. I am looking for international opportunities that are not related to agriculture, and I found that this site contains a giant database of programs and services around the world and allows searches by country of interest.

Just for fun, I searched for opportunities in the Czech Republic, because it is an area of the world I would like to visit someday. I was pleased to find two organizations that may be possible contacts for a future sabbatic leave related to health promotion and immigrant issues, two topics of concern

in my current Extension position. Both organizations had short-term volunteer opportunities available. The site lists contact information and frequently includes descriptions of the programs that each agency or organization provides.

## The Local Networking Connection

The Global Relations committee of Epsilon Sigma Phi has a goal of expanding their Web site to include advertising of international work opportunities, listings of international diversity and multi-cultural trainings, and postings of Extension professionals experienced in international work. While that work is progressing at the national level, states can develop their own databases that can promote sharing of information regarding international experiences. Wouldn't it be great to be able to find out who in your state has been to the country you would like to work in? What if they could share with you the connections they have already established with organizations and groups in that country?

The Oregon State University Gamma chapter of ESP attempted to facilitate this sharing through a statewide survey in 2001. An e-mail survey was sent to all Extension faculty, staff, and retired faculty in the state organization. Retirees not on e-mail services received a printed copy. One hundred seventy-nine people responded, and of those, 88 reported having had an international work experience. Some professionals reported a single international trip. Others had multiple trips, with a maximum of 11 different international experiences during their careers.

The survey asked the:

- Name of the country worked in,
- Year(s) worked in that country,
- Name of the sponsoring or collaborating organization or group in the country, and
- Type of project worked on while in the country.

Follow-up calls and e-mails were used to collect accurate additional information, and a database was compiled. A Global Relations Committee information booth was set up during Extension Annual Conference, held on campus in the fall. This resulted in more people completing the survey, and those surveys were added to the database. This database is available for any interested faculty in the state, and plans are proceeding to place it on an Oregon Gamma Chapter ESP Web site that is currently under development.

The Oregon ESP Global Relations committee has also been active in sponsoring programs that address the issue of international work during the annual conference. Faculty and staff who have had international experiences are invited to share them with the larger organization. It's another way to keep the idea of the value of Extension international experiences visible in the organization. Sustained, ongoing efforts like these will be required if we are to become a truly international organization.

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