

**University of Messina (UniMe), University of Córdoba (UCO), Center for
Integrative Mediterranean Studies (CIMS)
Annual Report
Dr. Heber H. Newsome**

Partnerships: University of Messina (UniMe) – Messina, Italy
University of Córdoba (UCO) – Córdoba, Spain

Center: Center for Integrative Mediterranean Studies (CIMS)

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UniMe:

- Francesco Tomasello, ftomasel@unime.it, Rector and Chief of Neurosurgery
- Giuseppe Anastasi, ananpuc@unime.it, ProRector and Prof. of Neuroanatomy
- Antonino Germanò, germano@unime.it, International Student Coordinator and Professor of Neurosurgery
- Marcella Scalisi, scalispim@unime.it, Assistant Director, CIMS

UCO:

- Jose Manuel Roldan Noguerras, ejolo@uco.es, Rector and Profesor of Biochemistry
- Reyes Roncero Lopez, gelgorom@uco.es, Vice Rector for Internacional Relations and Profesor of Biochemistry
- Manolo Torres Aguilar, mtorres@uco.es, Vice Rector for Cultural and Student Affairs and Professor of Law

Partnership Summary Description:

The UniMe Partnership started with a visit in Spring 2004 by three UniMe Neurosurgeons to VCU. Among them was Rector Tomasello, who had (as well as Prof. Germanò) spent a year of fellowship in Neurosurgery at VCU many years ago, and with Dr. Trani's welcoming encouragement, used his office as Rector to promote a partnership here. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in July of 2004, establishing the UniMe-VCU Partnership. In June of 2005, a conference was held, including representatives from Córdoba (with whom UniMe has had a long relationship), which resulted in a MOU for CIMS being signed in October 2005. In December 2006, the UCO-VCU Partnership was formalized. We are astonished and proud to see what has happened in four short years.

CIMS is a consortium of the three universities. It is a concept, an administrative unit, a physical entity (beautiful Villa Pace in Messina) and an extraordinary location for contact around the entire Mediterranean Basin, south-central Europe, and the near East.

UniMe and UCO both place a high value on personal contact and relationships. This affords many opportunities to seek out faculty partners, but the pace is not swift. Also, both places are marvelous hosts and lavish in their welcome. NOTE: except for airfares, all expenses are host paid during visits to either university. This fact is very attractive to travelers from VCU; but when we host them, it is difficult to scrimp and look them in the eye. Their visits here are expensive. In our turn in September 2009 to host the CIMS Conference, we seem to have enough financial support, fortunately.

Because of the obvious preponderance of science background in the two administrations, they are similar in their natural foci. We have been duly attentive to these foci, but it has been our determined goal to broaden our interrelationships into all areas of VCU. Some restrictions exist, of course, in that they lack certain schools that we have and vice versa. The challenge of two separate campuses in Richmond is magnified by the fact that each of the other two partners has four separate campuses and finding matching faculty can be a problem. Our efforts to broaden are beginning to pay off, as you will see in later sections. Finally, UniMe and UCO share with each other the common milieu of a socialized system of funding to which we have no direct access, and many of their endeavors are made possible by central government funding such as European Union sources. While the three universities satisfy the EU conditions of two “domestic” partners and one foreign partner in seeking funding, many of the EU RFPs seem to exclude U.S. participation. The challenge in the coming years to find external funds has been lessened by the addition of Dr. Marcella Scalisi, who has proven herself in the past few months as identifying some European possibilities.

Significant Outcomes:

2007-08 has been noteworthy both for the development of old (O) themes and opening up of new (N) avenues. Below, an attempt is made also to distinguish the uniquely UniMe or UCO projects from the joint CIMS ones.

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| UniMe: | (O) Urban Studies with Prof. Michele Limosani
(N) Mathematics with Prof. Domenico Fusco
(O) Orthodontics with Prof. Giancarlo Cordasco
(N) Orthopedics with Prof. Robert Adelaar
(N) VCU Study Abroad in Córdoba with Prof. Stefania Taviano |
| UCO: | (O) ELP with Vice Rector Isabel Roncero
(N) Film Studies with Prof. Pedro Poyato (VCU, UCO, UdeG)
(N) VCU Study Abroad in Córdoba with Vice Rector Roncero |
| CIMS: | (O) River Systems with Guglielmo/Roncero
(O) Language/Culture with Torres/Romano/Taviano
(O) Computer Science with Grasso/TBA
(O) Neuroscience with Anastasi/Germano/TBA
(N) Cinema with Poyato/TBA |

Research Subjects:

All of the projects below are promising projects that have or should lead to publications. However, Substantial vs. Potential refers to their chances for funding.

Substantial:

- River Systems study – unusual opportunity to compare the transition from fresh through brackish to saline water in a U.S. (James), Sicilian, and Spanish river.
- Urban Studies – to establish a background profile of Messina areas, potential impact of the Straits bridge there.
- Film Studies – a look at common threads around the Mediterranean and in the New World (will include the University of Guadalajara)

Potential:

- Cancer in general – areas to explore for comparison in the 3 locations
- Computer Science – to examine new ways to treat data, especially as it supports research

Academic (Teaching) Collaborations:

The English Language Program (ELP) with Córdoba is now in its third year. A similar program will be initiated in Summer 2010 with Messina. The success of this program is indicated by the repeated over-subscription and the positive cash flow.

The Spanish language endeavor is led by McKenna Brown with consideration of moving the Summer Abroad program from Seville to Córdoba. The Italian language activity still includes the opportunity to study in Sicily under Prof. Andrea Romano, but led by Bernardo Piciche. VCU is looking at possibilities of moving our Perugia summer Study Abroad program to Modica, Sicily under the sponsorship of UniMe.

The Urban Studies area with John Accordino continues to expand. He is now in Messina teaching and developing programs which he will import to VCU. Fabrizio Fasulo, who received his Master's at VCU, has returned to VCU from Messina to help with these projects.

The Rivers Project also will include experiences for graduate students.

The Film Studies Project, started by McKenna Brown and Bernardo Piciche and including the participation of UniMe and UCO is a promising proposal. A major grant request was submitted in March seeking EU funding. It will include additional courses in film relations to Old and New World cultures. The University of Guadalajara, with its internationally known film program, will participate.

Teaching programs have been established with Messina in Orthodontics (Lindauer and Shroff) and Anatomy (Povlishock).

Student Exchanges and Other Experiences:

To our knowledge, there are no exchanges at the undergraduate level. There are 2 Milazzo and Pastena fellowships funded out of the VCU President's Office for Messina students to spend a semester at VCU.

As mentioned, the earliest exchanges were with Medical and Pharmacy students, then followed by the Neuroanatomy summer school program for VCU/UniMe graduate students who spend a week in Richmond and two weeks in Messina. The Medical students (6) and Pharmacy students (8) from each place pay their own airfare. (An attempt is made to help with the Graduate students' airfare). All three sets of students' stays are host paid (housing and a meal stipend). The UniMe Medical students have served 6-week apprenticeships in Anesthesiology, Oncology, Pediatrics and Radiology. The faculty members "donate" time to these students, as much as 40-50 hours per week. The experience is routinely praised by both sides and last year, in an unprecedented move, UniMe paid for an extra 6 of their students to attend VCU. This year, the extra 6 could not be accommodated, due to the increased class size in the School of Medicine. The Pharmacy students are taken into the Medicinal Chemistry lab, where they are given one-on-one training. Pharmacy, Anesthesiology, and Neurosurgery have also taken post-graduate students into their labs. In several specific cases, these Messina students have brought word of our professors back to their Messina counterparts and some of the research developments that were listed above have resulted.

The University of Córdoba and VCU share an identical Medical student exchange program, with 6 students from VCU engaging in a month-long rotation at UCO and vice versa.

VCU will host the annual CIMS international conference which rotates between the three partners. We have chosen the theme of "Globalization: Implications for the Mediterranean Region." The response has been excellent, with VCU well-represented along with Messina, Córdoba and others from the US and abroad. A program is attached. The publicity for VCU and the opportunity for students/faculty to learn interesting things are both very positive aspects. A bonus is an extra presentation the day after the conference on film studies. The negative financial impact on other CIMS initiatives is a minor disadvantage. September 17-19, 2009 (the conference dates) will be a noteworthy experience.

Funding and Future Challenges:

There has been a very positive development regarding funding outside of university sources. The new addition to the CIMS staff in Messina, Dr. Marcella Scalisi, has proven very capable in navigating the European Union labyrinth of funding possibilities. A proposal related to Film Studies has already been submitted. It is expected that proposals for the Rivers Project and the Urban Studies project will be submitted. Some of the changes in EU rules have relaxed the prohibition of U.S. participation.

The biggest challenge this past year has been the shortage of and uncertainty about VCU funding. In addition to the obvious effect of downsizing programs and expectations, the duress under which Schools and Departments have worked has been telling. Several initiatives embraced by our overseas partners have been curtailed by the budgetary restraints and the resulting pressure to bring in new monies now. In the short term, the challenge will be to hold our ground with the current budget, build on current strengths, and attempt to find external sources. As money returns (we hope), so will faculty enthusiasm and new programs can move forward.

Our partners in Messina and Córdoba have been very generous in helping us and if we don't shut the door on faculty and student exchanges, they will continue to be tangibly

