Albuquerque NM, May 12, 2000

Professor Edward A. Fox
Department of Computer Science, M/C 0106
660 McBryde Hall
Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Dear Professor Fox:

On behalf of the Ibero-American Science and Technology Education Consortium (ISTEC) accept our special greetings. We are pleased to write this letter in order to strongly support the Virginia Tech proposal to the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. We are convinced that this Graduate Student Development Initiative will benefit not only the academic and scientific community in the United States but also the Ibero-American community of researchers and professors.

This Proposal is of crucial importance because it will allow us to strengthen the association we have developed with Virginia Tech and the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD). The purpose of this alliance is to create awareness on the importance of having access to real time information on the most recent research projects produced in today's academic world, and awareness about the availability of new revolutionary technologies that can link academic efforts to otherwise isolated academic areas.

Taking into account that information technologies will induce driving forces to generate social and economic growth, ISTEC through its Initiatives aims to work in a collaborative effort with academia, industries, international agencies and governments, promoting scientific and technological education, joint international efforts in research and development, economic integration, and human capital development within the region.

As you know the ISTEC Library Linkages Initiative is a long-term project that seeks to modernize document delivery as a component of education and research and development (R&D). This initiative also seeks to broaden electronic availability of research materials, to upgrade the information system skills of library staff, and to sharpen the savvy and independence of the electronic library user. ISTEC's LibLink Initiative also seeks to solve the information shortage and lack of dissemination of academic work, especially by new masters and doctorate programs graduates, the ones who produce the most recent research.

To date, projects within the Library Linkages Initiative have trained in excess of 5,000 people, transferred over 150,000 pages of documents, created regional inter-library loan systems, established an on-line journal for Information Technology, established databases for local library collections, and developed software for document transmission as well as a search engine for retrieval of on-line journal information. In 1999, the ISTEC-LibLink network supplied over 10,000 documents electronically to its members. This is the largest collaborative effort in Digital Libraries via Internet in the entire region, providing for 86% of all documents delivered to the universities. Based on this experience, the model is being utilized in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and Spain. Working with Virginia Tech and NDLTD collaboration is performed in a multiple, all inclusive and interactive axis, and researchers from all languages and all academic centers of the region can benefit from access to current scientific information in real time.
ISTEC shares the idea that it is important to join efforts, maximize all our resources, exchange information, identify common problems and solutions, mitigate deficiencies of information and achieve our primary goal, to be efficient agents delivering services and products resulting in greater sustainable development. ISTEC envisions a joint working plan with Virginia Tech chartered by a feasible program that will enable us to open new opportunities in areas of common understanding.

Taking all this into consideration, ISTEC supports Virginia Tech FIPSE proposal and wishes to broaden our collaboration horizon with NDLTD. Follow along these lines of collaboration and cooperation we aim at achieving an adequate level of development in science and technology education in the Ibero-American region.

Sincerely,

Ramiro Jordan
ISTEC Executive Director