Dear Dr. Fox:

I am pleased to write, as a Member of the Steering Committee of the NDLTD representing UNESCO, to support Virginia Tech’s FIPSE proposal for the Graduate Student Development Initiative. As you know, UNESCO and particularly the Communication, Information and Informatics Sector (CII), has been interested for some time in the electronic transmission and storage of documents, particularly of theses and dissertations. It is our belief that these documents constitute a rich resource of research literature that to date has not been fully utilized, and which could be of great benefit to the Member States of UNESCO.

UNESCO/CII is pleased to have been involved with the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Project for the past few years. We expect that by using computer technology, theses and dissertations will undergo a transformation similar to that now underway in electronic journals. The proposed project, in concert with the Open Archives Initiative, will greatly benefit graduate schools of all sizes by making information more accessible to all.

The Graduate Student Development Initiative is particularly promising because it involves a partnership between Virginia Tech and four other graduate institutions. These partnerships can be highly successful by leveraging the particular expertise of each institution toward the goals of the project. Moreover, this project will enhance the experience of all five institutions with ETDs so that they can serve as models for other institutions interested in starting an ETD program.

Thank you for keeping me informed of new developments as your project progresses. I will in turn make this project better known at UNESCO.

The project will undoubtedly move the technology and practice in the direction of better use of theses, dissertations, and other research documents. It is for this reason that we at UNESCO strongly encourage FIPSE to support this proposal. We will closely follow the project as it develops, and you may count on our full cooperation in this important effort.

Yours sincerely,

M. Tawfik
Director, Unit for Special Projects
Communication, Information and Informatics Sector

Professor Edward A. Fox
Department of Computer Science
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)
660 McBryde Hall, M/C 0106
Blacksburg, VA 24061 U.S.A.
Fax: (1-540) 231-6075