

**NOMINATION**

**of**

**Dr. Bruce L. Ahrendsen**

**for the**

**BUMPERS COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OFFICE**

**2017 OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AWARD**

**June 30, 2017**

## **Description of Innovations and Successful Implementation of Strategies**

Dr. Ahrendsen has a passion for international education and has had extensive leadership experience in international education. In 1998 he initiated the International Agribusiness concentration of the M.S. in Agricultural Economics at the University of Arkansas which included an exchange program with the Scottish Agricultural College for 1998-2004 and continued with Ghent University in Belgium for 2005 to present. This is an innovative, structured program that requires University of Arkansas students to study one semester in Europe and European students to study one semester at the University of Arkansas. One of the first graduates of the International Agribusiness concentration was Allison Thomas who recently received the Bumpers College Young Alumnus Award. Allison was recognized for her leadership in the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. She attributed her drive to work and excel in the international arena to the “eye-opening” experience provided by her education at the University of Arkansas.

In 2008, Drs. Ahrendsen, Parsch, and Wailes were awarded a U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) grant for \$448,000 to establish and operate the Atlantis Double M.S. Degree Program (Atlantis Program). Dr. Ahrendsen’s leadership, promotion, and advising has allowed the Program to be highly successful.

The innovative Atlantis Program allows students to earn two degrees: an M.S. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Arkansas *and* an international M.S. in Rural Development (IMRD) awarded jointly by Ghent University (Belgium), Humboldt University (Berlin, Germany), Agrocampus Ouest (Rennes, France), University of Pisa (Italy), and the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (Slovakia). The European partners received a grant of 428,000 Euros from the EU Commission to assist them in offering the program. The highly competitive grant was one of only eight awarded in 2008 and the project was the only one to have anything to do with agriculture, business, economics, rural, or development.

The Atlantis Program remains an innovative graduate program at the University of Arkansas where students study both in the U.S. and Europe and are allowed to transfer up to 15 semester credit hours to the University of Arkansas. The double M.S. program trains specialists with comparative knowledge on EU, US, and international agricultural economic and rural development policies. This is accomplished by a combination of theoretical and practical education. Funding was available to assist with transatlantic mobility for students and faculty members during the five-year project. Although grant funding ended in 2013, students continue to enrol in the Program, both at the University of Arkansas and in Europe. The Atlantis Program is designed as a “balanced” program, such that for every one student beginning the program at the University of Arkansas there is one student beginning the program at one of our partner universities in Europe. Therefore, the University of Arkansas ultimately graduates two students for every one student recruited by the University of Arkansas.

The 24-month program consists of five academic terms: a basic academic training semester, two specialization semesters, a case study during a summer term, and a final semester completing a master thesis project in a comparative EU-US study. Students study abroad for up to one year with University of Arkansas students visiting two EU consortium universities and EU students visiting the University of Arkansas.

The Atlantis Program included a memorandum of understanding among consortia universities in 2009 and renewed in 2014, development and approval of the joint curriculum, setting up an organizational framework for student and faculty mobility and exchange, implementation of a transfer credit arrangement and a quality control system, development of a language and cultural exchange program and other necessary activities for the success of the double degree program.

The Atlantis Program is a truly life-transforming experience for students. Graduates of the Program have gone on to complete Ph.D. programs both in the US and Europe, publish numerous scientific journal articles, become instructors and research scientists, and work for non-governmental organizations and multinational companies.

### **Statement Describing the Value of an International Experience**

The International Agribusiness and Atlantis Program concentrations of the M.S. in Agricultural Economics embody the mission of the Bumpers College International Program Office. These educational programs “provide structured international experiences that enhance the marketability of students for career and academic opportunities through faculty driven, sustainable initiatives.” But more than that, these programs provide *life-transforming* experiences for students, such that they become more open to other views, ideas, and cultures that can only fully be obtained with an extended study abroad experience, such as offered by these programs.

In addition to the direct impact on students participating in these programs, the students themselves have an impact on other students. For example, whether it be a German student in a University of Arkansas classroom or an American student in a Ghent University classroom, the student will have an impact on other students and contribute to their education. As an instructor, the diversity of views, ideas, and cultures offered by these students contributes to a more stimulating educational environment which is highly valued by Dr. Ahrendsen.

Moreover, these programs have enhanced the quality and reputation of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness. This has been accomplished by attracting exceptional students to the University of Arkansas, both from the US (Arkansas and other states) and elsewhere in the world, which likely would not have happened if not for these international programs. These programs have also brought international faculty to the UA as visiting scholars to participate in educational and research activities.

## **Support of International Instruction**

PI/Co-PI, U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education competitive grant for project "EU-US Atlantis Double Degree Program in Rural Development & Agricultural Economics", \$448,000 (2008-2013)

Awarded grant funding of 5,000 Euro (approximately \$5,500) to support a UA student's travel and living expenses to study one semester at the Slovak University of Agriculture (2017)

Dr. Ahrendsen has been invited since 2002 by a number of universities and the European Commission to lead study weeks and present on educational and research programs. This has resulted in approximately \$50,000 in travel support that has allowed Dr. Ahrendsen to promote the programs of the University of Arkansas in general and the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness in particular.

## **Other International Education Activities**

In addition to his leadership and development of the International Agribusiness and Atlantis Program concentrations at the University of Arkansas, Dr. Ahrendsen has been a member of the Management Board of the Atlantis and International M.S. in Rural Development (IMRD) Programs, which is comprised of representatives from the consortium of five universities in Europe, but also includes representatives from the Wageningen University (Netherlands), University of Cordoba (Spain), Nanjing Agricultural University (China), China Agricultural University (Beijing, China), University of Agricultural Sciences Bangalore (India), University of Pretoria (South Africa), Can Tho University (Vietnam), and Espol University (Ecuador), Korea University (Seoul), Seoul National University (South Korea), and Chungbuk National University (South Korea).

Dr. Ahrendsen serves on the Board of the International Network for the MBA in Agribusiness and Commerce (AGRIMBA). AGRIMBA has developed and reviewed International MBA in Agribusiness programs at more than ten leading universities in Central and Eastern Europe and Asia. Besides serving as a board member, Dr. Ahrendsen has led intensive, real-time, agribusiness case-based study weeks in International MBA programs at the Czech University of Life Sciences (Prague), Warsaw University of Life Sciences (Poland), National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine (Kiev), the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (Slovakia), and University of Zagreb (Croatia).

Dr. Ahrendsen is an active member of the University of Arkansas International Education Advisory Council (2015-present) and Bumpers College International Agricultural Programs Committee (2001-2005, 2012-present). Moreover, he has presented on international curriculum at conferences and universities in Europe, Asia, and the United States.

### **Brief International Vitae: Bruce L. Ahrendsen**

University of Arkansas, Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food & Life Sciences  
and Division of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness

#### **International Activities and Honors:**

- University of Arkansas International Education Advisory Council (2015-present)
- Bumpers College International Agricultural Programs Committee (2001-2005, 2012-present)
- Developed Atlantis Double Degree in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development concentration at the University of Arkansas (2008-present)
- Initiated International Agribusiness concentration of the M.S. in Agricultural Economics at the University of Arkansas and exchange program with the Scottish Agricultural College (1997-2004) and Ghent University (2005-present)
- Outstanding Faculty/Department Member, U.f Arkansas Sponsored Student Programs (2017)
- Received grant funding of 5,000 Euro (approximately \$5,500) to support a UA student's travel and living expenses to study at the Slovak University of Agriculture (2017)
- Invited by Korea University to present on double M.S. degree programs (2015)
- PI/Co-PI, U.S. Department of Education, Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education competitive grant for project "EU-US Atlantis Double Degree Program in Rural Development & Agricultural Economics", \$448,000 (2008-2013)
- Bumpers College Alumni Society Outstanding Advising Award (2013)
- Invited as an expert by the EU Commission to present and participate in a conference on the role of double and joint degrees in global education, Brussels, Belgium (2012)
- Presented on curriculum innovation and met with leaders and members of standing committees of the Association of European Life Science Universities (ICA) including the ICA Network for Innovation in Higher Education in the Life Sciences and the International Relations Officers' Network of ICA (2007, 2008, 2011-2013) and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU, formerly NASULGC, 2008)
- Presented at international conferences and universities on degree programs and distance vs. case study education (2008-2013)
- Atlantis Double M.S. Degree Program and Transatlantic Program, Coordinator (2011-2016)
- Board Member, International Network for the MBA in Agribusiness and Commerce, which is affiliated with the Association for European Life Sciences Universities (2007-present)
- Management Board Member of the Atlantis and International Masters in Rural Development Programs (2011-2016)
- Led intensive agribusiness modules and joint study weeks in the International MBA in Agribusiness for the Czech University of Life Sciences in Prague, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, and National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, University of Zagreb Croatia (2002-present)
- Led technical assistance visits to Slovakia to assess farm financial problems and provide recommendations to the Slovak Republic's Ministry of Agriculture (1997, 2000)
- Advised and mentored numerous international students and domestic students studying abroad

## Appendices

### Letters of Support

- Steve Halbrook, Professor and Head, Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, University of Arkansas
- Marei Houpert, Atlantis Program Alumnus. Ms. Houpert is currently a Ph.D. student in the Public Policy Program at the University of Arkansas
- Peter Bielik is Rector and Professor, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. Professor Bielik has experience with both the Atlantis Double M.S. Degree Program in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development and the International M.S. in Rural Development (IMRD) and the Network for the International MBA in Agribusiness and Commerce. For more information and CV, see:  
<http://is.uniag.sk/lide/clovek.pl?id=101;zpet=http://is.uniag.sk/pracoviste/zamestnanci.pl?id=10,lang=en;lang=en>

June 30, 2017

Bumpers College International Programs Office  
Outstanding International Education Award  
University of Arkansas  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Members of the Award Committee:

I am pleased to support the nomination of Dr. Bruce Ahrendsen for the Bumpers College International Programs Office's Outstanding International Education Award. He exhibits all the traits of a person who advocates international education. He is engaged, dedicated, caring, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. He is always available for students to answer their questions about international education. He is a mentor not only for their academic careers but also through his patience, friendship, knowledge, wisdom and concern. He is a strong and positive influence on students and prepares them for the possibilities of international education whether they are from the U.S. and going abroad, or they are from abroad and studying at the University of Arkansas.

As a Department Head, I can always be confident that Dr. Ahrendsen will attend to his duties representing the department on international programs in an efficient and timely manner. He diligently pursues information and works with the Graduate School and the offices of Study Abroad, Sponsored Student Programs, and International Students and Scholars, and International Admissions so that he can effectively inform students and the Department. Despite having an active research program that places large demands on his time, he is available for students and for serving on the University's International Education Advisory Council and the Bumpers College's International Programs Committee. He definitely has the international experience and expertise to make significant contributions to these committees.

Dr. Ahrendsen played a significant role in the development of two international concentrations in the M.S. program: International Agribusiness in 1997 and Atlantis in 2008. Both concentrations offer innovative curricula and meaningful international opportunities for students. The Atlantis Program is particularly unique in that it allows students to earn two master's degrees: an M.S. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Arkansas and an International M.S. in Rural Development awarded jointly by five leading universities in Europe. Drs. Ahrendsen, Parsch, and Wailes were awarded a grant for \$448,000 from the U.S. Department of Education that supported

the development of the Atlantis Program and funded students and faculty exchanges. The experiences and education the students receive are hard to quantify, although it is suffice to say they are great. I am not aware of any other agricultural economics program in the United States that allows for such rewarding international opportunities.

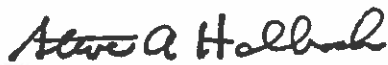
The graduates of the Atlantis Program have gone on to be successful in Ph.D. programs, as instructors and researchers, and employees at non-governmental organizations and multinational companies. The Atlantis Program together with Dr. Ahrendsen's efforts have certainly contributed to increasing the marketability of students to graduate programs and employers.

There have been many research publications as the result of the Atlantis Program, not only by the students and their advisors, but also by our faculty working with faculty at our Atlantis partner universities. The Atlantis Program has also led to opportunities for our faculty to work with Ph.D. students at our partner universities that have resulted in increased productivity.

Dr. Ahrendsen is involved with the International MBA in Agribusiness and Commerce offered at a number of life science universities in Central and Eastern Europe. He serves on a board with other international educators that is responsible for developing and reviewing these programs. He also contributes to the network of universities offering the International MBA by annually teaching at one of the network universities an intensive agribusiness study week to students that come from a number of universities in Europe. The study week frequently results in case studies that Dr. Ahrendsen uses to enhance his classes at the University of Arkansas.

For these and other reasons, I strongly encourage you to provide Dr. Bruce Ahrendsen your utmost consideration for the Bumpers College Outstanding International Education Award.

Sincerely,



Steve A. Halbrook  
Professor and Department Head



June 30, 2017

Marei Houpert  
University of Arkansas  
MULN 220Q  
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Dear Dr. Leslie Edgar and Award Selection Committee:

I strongly support the selection of Dr. Bruce Ahrendsen as this year's recipient of the Outstanding International Education Award from the Bumpers College International Programs Office. I first met Dr. Ahrendsen in January 2012 at Ghent University. I had just completed my first semester in the Atlantis Program and I knew I would be at the University of Arkansas in August. I remember how friendly Dr. Ahrendsen was (and is) and how he wanted to answer any questions I had. His welcoming attitude certainly confirmed that the University of Arkansas was the correct place for me to study. His concern for my success continued, not only throughout the completion of the Program, but also after I graduated from the Program.

The Atlantis Program is a challenging and rewarding program that was particularly appealing to me like many others. Students study at a minimum of three universities, although it is possible to study at four universities like I did. Although the exposure to different universities, teaching styles, and cultures is one of the most stimulating aspects of the Atlantis Program, the movement among universities can also be difficult. However, Dr. Ahrendsen and others at the University of Arkansas created a welcoming environment to minimize any difficulty in transitioning to the University. Moreover, the coordination among the participating universities and between some universities and students could be problematic. This was not the case at the University of Arkansas because Dr. Ahrendsen was persistent in making sure students received the information they needed and he was champion for any concerns they may have at the management board meetings. I am further convinced that many U.S. students only considered studying abroad after Dr. Ahrendsen was able to help them overcome their concerns of participating in an international program.

The breadth of coursework available to students is another strength of the Atlantis Program. The availability of agricultural economics and rural development courses among the universities would be impossible to duplicate at any one university. The synergy between agricultural economics and rural development is another strength of the Program. I believe the Atlantis Program was great preparation for me to pursue the Ph.D. in Public Policy at the University of Arkansas. And I know of other graduates of the Program that have also gone on to be successful

in Ph.D. programs at other universities.

In summation, Dr. Ahrendsen has been a strong supporter of international education, both for U.S. students and non-U.S. students. My support for Dr. Ahrendsen to receive this award is without reservation, and I know there are many other students who share that opinion with me. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Marei Houpert

Public Policy Ph.D. Student  
University of Arkansas



Dr. h. c. prof. Ing. Peter Bielik, PhD.  
Rector

Nitra, June 29, 2017

Nomination Committee  
Outstanding International Education Award  
University of Arkansas  
USA

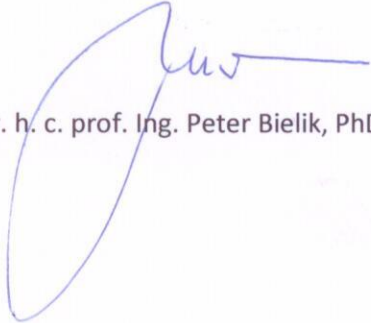
### Letter of Support

It is my pleasure to write this letter of support for Dr. Bruce L. Ahrendsen of the University of Arkansas. I have known Dr. Ahrendsen for many years as a dedicated teacher and a researcher with rich professional experience and deep knowledge of the scientific field of agribusiness.

Dr. Ahrendsen contributes greatly to the internationalization of higher education, building new and fostering existing international relations with academic institutions around the world. In my capacity of the Rector of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (SUA) I have known him as a hardworking and passionate colleague significantly contributing to our common Atlantis Double MSc Program as well as the International MSc in Rural Development (IMRD) jointly awarded by SUA, Ghent University, Humboldt University, Agrocampus Ouest in Rennes, and the University of Pisa. Moreover, Dr. Ahrendsen has worked for more than twenty years within the International MBA AGRIMBA program not only as an international expert delivering lectures at AGRIMBA partner universities, but also as a guarantor of the intensive study week regularly organized by AGRIMBA.

High expertise, deep professionalism as well as the efforts Dr. Ahrendsen takes conducting his duties make him a valuable asset to any university or institution he has ever cooperated with. Therefore, I have no hesitancy whatsoever to support Dr. Bruce L. Ahrendsen in his nomination for the Outstanding International Education Award.

Best regards



Dr. h. c. prof. Ing. Peter Bielik, PhD.