



Pacific Newsbytes

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Charting the Future Course of Distance Education in the Western Pacific



By Bruce Best

A very successful Distance Education forum was recently held in Guam (August 1-3, 2000) where educational leaders from Micronesia witnessed a first time ever multisite international video teleconference using the Pan Pacific Education and Communication Experiments by Satellite (PEACESAT) program.

All across the region, people are showing interest in distance education as a vehicle for learning. Increased regional collaboration is becoming necessary to ensure sustainability at the jurisdictional level. Issues associated with course articulation between institutions,



Group photo taken outside the beautiful Ladera Tower in Mangilao, Guam on August 2, 2000, during the Distance Education Policy Forum.

quality control and revenue sharing all need to be addressed within a regional context. The real challenge is to create the right balance between what makes sense regionally while at the same time ensuring local autonomy, control and support for different jurisdictional level distance education agendas and priorities.

This policy forum has been organized to provide leaders from across the region with an opportunity to

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formulate recommendations and suggestions for how to address these issues and others. By doing so, the participants in this forum will be able to make a real contribution to charting the future course of distance education in the region over the next five to ten years.

During the teleconference, V.35 and ISDN bridge and integrated H.324 video from New York mixed with H.320 links from Washington DC and Hawaii (PREL/PEACESAT). Congressman Dr. Robert Underwood used the technology to present the opening address for the Forum. DE Challenges and recommendations for Pacific Nations were addressed. The Forum considered cross cultural, technical and human resource needs to deliver Distance Education throughout the 3 million square mile Western Pacific region. A clearer picture emerged regarding commonalities and differences in circumstance, philosophy and availability of resources to support distance education from one jurisdiction to the next. The objectives and overview along with the results can be found on the DE forum Web site through the UOG web site or direct to www.iconguam.com/deproject/.

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