



## Florida FTAA Provides Seed Money for FIU's SMECE Project

Florida FTAA has combined efforts with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to fund the new Small and Medium Enterprises Center of Excellence (SMECE) program at Florida International University (FIU) and has enjoyed positive feedback from the community in so doing. The combined effort has contributed more than \$379,000 for the SMECE program.

**"E**arly support from Florida FTAA, Inc. was crucial in helping us to develop a top-notch proposal for winning an award from USAID," said Jerry Haar, professor of management and international business at FIU.

Critics of free trade in the Americas contend that regional trade agreements will benefit large countries to the detriment of smaller nations. However, the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) is intended to boost prosperity and opportunity in smaller economies through a community of liberalized trade. The recent contribution of Florida FTAA and USAID to fund this new program at FIU that targets small business

owners in the developing DR-CAFTA countries is proof.

Through the program, individuals who show an interest in furthering their business education can receive grants to undertake study at the FIU College of Business Administration. The SMECE program is designed to train entrepreneurs of small to midsize businesses from the DR-CAFTA nations, seeking to provide executive business practicum for those industries that will soon be impacted by regionalism and free trade.

More education for these business leaders will translate into stronger development of the private sector in developing economies. Their procurement of jobs and development of relationships with distributors and suppliers are sure to strengthen the region in multiple ways.

**"We are very proud of this unprecedented project and there are two very important friends of Florida FTAA that I would like to thank in addition to FIU for bringing this idea forward to me early on. Ruben Gomez and Beatriz Richerri developed an extraordinarily well thought out business plan that allowed us to bring this worthy endeavor to FIU. This work and the combined efforts of FIU and USAID have ensured that Florida FTAA be at the forefront of providing the training necessary for our friends in Central America and the Dominican Republic to take full advantage of this new economy," said Jorge L. Arrizurieta.**



### College of Business Administration

Florida International University

#### SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE ENTERPRISES CENTER OF EXCELLENCE SMECE



#### SOLUTIONS FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZE ENTERPRISES

- Preparation of a bankable business plan for expanding your business particularly in international trade.
- Presentation of product and sector opportunities in the Americas.
- Targeted Networking
- Certificate of Advanced Management in International Business from FIU.

**\*\* For more information, please call FIU's College of Business Administration at (305) 348-0175 or visit <http://sicep.fiu.edu>**