UC Irvine Paul Merage School of Business Faculty Collaborate with Cuban Professionals on How to Negotiate with Americans

Irvine, CA – (February 23, 2016) – UC Irvine Paul Merage School of Business professors William Hernandez Requejo and John Graham, both recognized international negotiation experts, collaborated February 15-16 with Alexis Codina Jiménez, recipient of the prestigious National Economist Award, and Rafael Montejo, director of the Centro de Estudios de Técnicas de Dirección (CETED) at the University of Havana, to develop and deliver a two-day program designed to teach Cubans how to negotiate efficiently and effectively with Americans and other potential trading partners.

The negotiation workshop covered topics including differences in communication styles and fundamental differences in economic thinking. Hernandez reports, “In everyday talk, Cubans interrupt one another frequently. Americans not so much. Interruptions are off putting to Americans and limit the information that can be gathered by Cuban negotiators in face-to-face bargaining.” Codina agreed, adding, “Cubans need to ask more questions and listen carefully to answers.”

During another component of the workshop, Cuban participants viewed videos demonstrating the problems Americans have negotiating with Japanese. “Not only did the Japanese silent period upset the American on the screen, the Cuban audience was even more uncomfortable, abuzz only after a few seconds,” said Graham.
Graham pointed out, “The interesting thing is that the Cuban professionals know more about Adam Smith than their American counterparts. But, neither side fully appreciates his ‘invisible hand’ statement: ‘By pursuing his own interests he frequently promotes that of the society more effectively than when he really intends to promote it.’ The Cuban educational system emphasizes Karl Marx collectivism. And most Americans miss the word frequently, leading to the over-interpretation that ‘greed is good.’” This observation highlights what is perhaps the greatest barrier to Cuban/American commercial interactions.

Codina opines, “Both sides have a lot to learn. But, exchanges like these are a good start toward solving communication and negotiation problems between the people of our two countries.”

William Hernández Requejo is a lecturer at The Paul Merage School of Business. He holds a Juris Doctorate from Georgetown University Law Center, in Washington D.C., a Master’s Degree in Spanish, and a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from the University of California, Irvine. Hernández is the executive director of the Center for Global Leadership at the Merage School. He also consults in the areas of international management, international business development, international negotiations and organizational development. Recently Hernandez Requejo was selected as an international expert by the United Nations Development Program and the Ministry of External Commerce (MINCEX) on the subject of foreign direct investment negotiations.

John L. Graham is a professor emeritus in marketing and international business. He currently serves as faculty director for the Center for Global Leadership at the Merage School.

Hernandez and Graham have traveled frequently to Havana since 2009 to organize a series of cooperative educational programs with their Cuban colleagues. On March 21, 2016, in collaboration with the Center for Research in International Economics (CIEI) at the University of Havana, Hernandez and Graham will be taking a class of 30 Merage School MBA students to Havana for a one-week residential course. The residential will take place at the same time President Obama is scheduled to visit the area. Similar to their first such program delivered in Havana in 2013, the residential will include Cuban speakers, enterprise visits, and interactions
with Cuban graduate students and business executives. Among the topics to be considered will be renewable energy, tourism, and the Cuban healthcare system. The Merage School/CETED/CIEI initiatives also include a growing list of joint research projects and executive education in both countries. All these programs are developed with the knowledge that trade between nations engenders peace.

**About The Paul Merage School of Business at UC Irvine**

The Paul Merage School of Business at UC Irvine offers four dynamic MBA programs, a Master of Professional Accountancy, Master of Science in Biotechnology Management, Master of Science in Engineering Management, and PhD and undergraduate business degrees that deliver its thematic approach to business education: sustainable growth through strategic innovation. The school graduates leaders with the exceptional ability to help grow their organizations through analytical decision-making, innovation and collaborative execution. In-class and on-site experiences with real-world business problems give students the edge needed to help companies compete in today’s global economy.

Seven Centers of Excellence and an Executive Education program provide numerous and varied opportunities for students and the business community at large to enhance their education experience and update their professional expertise. The Merage School consistently ranks among the top 10 percent of all AACSB-accredited programs through exceptional student recruitment, world-class faculty, a strong alumni network and close individual and corporate relationships. For more information, visit: merage.uci.edu.

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