



# LINC - Learning International Network Consortium

## A New Distance Learning Initiative in Developed and Developing Countries



By Richard C. Larson (above) and Janet Wasserstein

**LINC will empower educators working in their own country to bring higher education to a wider population.**

“Half the world’s population is under age 20; we have essentially no hope of educating these young people by conventional means. New learning modules, however, can provide access to high-quality learning opportunities for a wide variety of students, the vast majority of whom will never have the luxury of a residence-based higher education.”<sup>1</sup>

**To provide quality** higher education, soon, distance learning is the only option available to many, perhaps most, developing countries. Educational leaders in these countries need a trusted supporting international society, to share goals and objectives, plans of action and experiences; to learn lessons from others; to start innovative programs and evaluate them rigorously. A group of scholars and practitioners is forming with a primary goal of creating in-country infrastructure and systems, to promote higher education to its citizens, often in concert with international collaborators.

This is the motivation for a new MIT-managed initiative, the Learning International Network Consortium (LINC). The purpose of LINC is to help facilitate the implementation of world-class tertiary education in developing countries, leveraging internet, television, and radio technologies. The fraction of young people in developing countries who receive some form of tertiary educa-

tion is often less than 4 percent, in contrast to numbers greater than 40 percent in developed countries. In a global economy that increasingly rewards those with skills honed for the “knowledge industries,” developing countries will be left further behind unless their youth receive quality higher level education. Investment in such an effort is required not only for social fairness and justice but also for world accord. LINC will be an association of professionals and practitioners whose primary concern is quality tertiary e-learning in developing countries. It is a community of active scholars and doers.

A pioneering LINC workshop, to put together a new model of international cooperation in tertiary education based on openness and inclusion, was held on February 6-7, 2003, at MIT in Cambridge, Mass. Participants represented or brought experience from the following countries: Armenia, Canada, France, Hong Kong, Japan, India, Ireland, Iran, Israel, Mexico, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Syria, and the United States.