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East Meets West in Three-Way Educational Exchange

By [Tracy Manforte](#)
UNH News Bureau

DURHAM, N.H. -- Russian and American cultures meet head on in a three-year university partnership designed by Cathy Frierson, University of New Hampshire associate professor of history. The partnership includes UNH, Franklin Pierce Law Center and Vologda State University.

The purpose of the program is to further develop the law curriculum at Vologda State University in Russia and expand the knowledge of Russian law and culture at UNH and Franklin Pierce Law Center in Concord. The program is made possible by a U.S. Department of State grant to the UNH Center for International Education.

Vologda professors Vladimir Koshko and Igor Kozin arrived on campus last semester, and they continue to observe classes at UNH and Franklin Pierce, as well as study New Hampshire's legal system. They've also delivered guest lectures in classes on "Family Law" at Franklin Pierce and "History of Russia in the 20th Century" at UNH.

The tri-school program grew from an existing partnership between New Hampshire judges and lawyers and Vologda scholars working on a "Rule of Law" project with judges, jurists and prison administrators. It is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Frierson developed the "New Hampshire/Vologda Partnership in Pursuit of the Rule of Law" to create opportunity for Russians who want to affect political change.

"There's a new generation of law professors trying to build a rule of law society in Russia," she says, describing "rule of law" as a constitutional system with a government that must submit to laws and an

independent judiciary. "It should also include individual citizens' understanding of, trust in, and respect for the law," she adds. Through working to affect Russia's political system, Frierson also hopes to help people. "I wanted to support reformers outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg, because too much American funding goes to Moscow and disappears there."

Vologda University has a young faculty interested in learning more about rule of law practices, and the grant provided by the U.S. Department of State allows the exchange of faculty members between the two countries. Professor Kozin, essentially a program "ambassador," says he is enjoying his educational experience in New Hampshire.

"The legal system is very interesting; sometimes it is similar to the Russian one, but sometimes it's very different," Kozin said. "It's similar because, like the U.S., Russia has democratic principles in its legislation. But it's different because Russia, as do most European countries, has the code legal system, and so-called case law isn't the object of widespread attention as it is in the USA."

A book about American family law might also be in Kozin's future, he said.

His colleague, Professor Koshko, also has gained knowledge that he expects to use when he returns to Russia.

"I think I have taken from the U.S. a very good experience of the creative work of the professors and free study of the students," Koshko said. "My experiences in the U.S. and New Hampshire have been extensive in various subjects of American life. I have traveled in many states, had conversations with students, professors, officials and congressmen. This has been a very interesting reflection for me," he said.

The Russians aren't the only ones learning. UNH student assistant Kimberly Jarvis got involved last spring when Frierson asked her to help with the administrative part of the grant. Jarvis, a Ph.D. student in the history department, jumped at the chance. She said working with the Russian scholars has made her more culturally aware.

"I've talked with them about the political situation in Russia and how that affects their university," she said. "It's very interesting to be able to speak with them and hear their impressions not only of their experiences here, but also of what's happening in their own country."

Frierson hopes that through education and observation, the Russian visitors will learn more about law from the United States and import their new knowledge back home. "The two men at UNH represent the forces who will move Russia forward if they're given a chance," she said.

The exchange continues in May, when Frierson, Jarvis and two professors from Franklin Pierce travel to Vologda for teaching and research projects. In September and January 2001, UNH will welcome two to four new Vologda faculty members to campus.

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