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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Truman President Paino Signs Agreement for Academic Cooperation with UN-Sponsored Body, Team Completes Visit Aimed at Expanding Degree Opportunities Abroad

KIRKSVILLE, Mo. — With hopes of expanding academic cooperation with institutions abroad and expanding enrollment in select Truman graduate programming, Truman State University President, Dr. Troy Paino, entered into a memorandum of understanding with the European Center for Peace and Development (ECPD), at a ceremony on Sunday, October 25th.

The ECPD is a branch of the UN-mandated University for Peace and collaborates with other academic institutions to help citizens of the Balkans and elsewhere receive needed education to advance peace and prosperity in their countries. The ECPD is headquartered in Belgrade, Serbia.

The signing ceremony, which included Paino and the President of ECPD's Academic Council, Dr. Don Wallace, concludes an agreement to engage in broad ranging academic cooperation between ECPD and Truman. "This is a great opportunity to extend our reach to a part of the world hungry to take advantage of American higher education opportunities," said Paino. "It is an ideal place for Truman to raise its international profile and spread its public liberal arts mission."

Currently, Truman administrators are working with their regional counterparts to explore possible options for offering Truman's Master's degree in Leadership online to regional students. These options include the possibility of offering select coursework in one or more possible elective tracks, including content from Truman's existing graduate certificate in Sustainability and Environmental Studies, as well as select coursework in other fields in which regional partners have expressed interest.

Dr. Patrick Lecaque, Director of the Center for International Education, and Dr. Kevin Minch, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, accompanied President Paino on the trip to the signing, staying on for additional meetings with academic and community leaders in a week-long marathon of eight stops across Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia. Dr. Negoslav P. Ostogić, ECPD Executive Director facilitated the visit, which was a follow-up to a June exploratory trip by Lecaque and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr. Maria Di Stefano.

"We learned a great deal about the needs of students in this region during these visits," noted Lecaque, an experienced scholar of the Balkan region. "There are great opportunities here to meet a demonstrated need for education while opening new space for enrollment in Truman programming. In the ECPD we have a strong partner with enormous clout in the region and a network of partners in academia and government critical to making sure any program can be executed with reliable, on-ground support." Minch added, "Much will still need to occur before this, or any other online program can be established, including a lot of on-campus discussions. We are also looking at opportunities these sites might present for expanding meaningful offerings in our non-credit summer youth programming."

The team is optimistic that at least some coursework can be offered to students in the region during the 2015-2016 academic year, pending review and approval by faculty governance and accreditors in the U.S. and overseas.

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