Brown Leadership Institute Final Action Plan Progress Report

By Chris Dederick

My action plan following my participation in the Brown Leadership and Global Engagement Program during the summer of 2009 entailed a commitment on my behalf to contribute in whatever capacity I could to what has been dubbed the “telecenter movement” in Hungary. Hungary’s telecenters, which were established shortly after the fall of the communist regime, are run and funded through non-profit organizations and government subsidies. By providing free Internet access in otherwise isolated regions in Hungary, these telecenters continue to be an invaluable source of information. My belief in the significance of such centers hinges on their ability to give students and entrepreneurs in economically disadvantages areas the tools to pursue opportunities and a meaningful education.

Upon my return to Hungary, I began research through the Internet and personal contacts, discovering that a non-profit organization, called the Telehaz Association (Association of Telecottages) already existed and had operated in Hungary for several years.

Significant local and federal government initiatives had been taken to provide Internet in Hungary’s rural areas. However, support mechanisms did not exist, and local government administrators lacked the resources to effectively manage the Internet centers that had been set up. As a result, the Telehaz Association aimed to provide a network of support, technical and advisory to help effectively manage these Internet centers or Telecottages.

I contacted the Director of the organization, Mr. Fejes Istvan. After meeting I have determined that my school, the American International School of Budapest (AISB) could begin cooperating with Telehaz to provide high school volunteers for translation services, establish useful business contacts for donations, and also create a youth program targeted
at raising awareness as to safe uses of the Internet.

The American International School provides international education in the English language to students mostly from the diplomatic core, from various countries, and from foreign businesses operating in Hungary. However AISB has a growing population of Hungarian students who wish to pursue an international education. All AISB students are fluent in English, but otherwise English is still not widely spoken in rural Hungary. However, support from European Union programs as well as Internet content is largely only accessible with the knowledge of the English language. Our Hungarian-speaking students could therefore provide English language translation services from time to time for important projects of Telehaz entities.

In addition, the AISB parent community consists of high-level managers of multinational companies, as well as top-level diplomats whose organizations could donate equipment or help support applications for available funding from the EU and various NGO’s, programs such as USAID or World Bank.

Finally, Internet safety programs targeted to the youth are not yet integrated into Hungarian education and have not received appropriate attention. At AISB, such programs have been implemented and I believe that they should be adapted to local circumstances, translated and with the right media support, could be effectively implemented. I plan on making significant progress on these initiatives within the next 12 months.

In addition, I have taken my experiences from the Leadership Institute and applied those skills in two very significant projects that I didn’t envision at the time of my initial report at the conclusion of my program at Brown last summer.

The first project involved my initiative to help develop the Model
United Nations program at my school AISB. My experience with the MUN program dates back to Grade 9, and I have since participated at conferences such as the Iberian Model United Nations (IMUN), the Karinthy Model United Nations (KARMUN), and The Hague International Model United Nations (THIMUN). As I approach my 8\textsuperscript{th} international Model United Nations conference, I can draw on my experience in roles such as Ambassador to the General Assembly, US Ambassador to the Security Council, Delegation Ambassador at THIMUN, and conference chairman. Most recently I chaired in the General Assembly at KARMUN, and served as the Assistant President of the THIMUN Special Conference. Having learned a great deal from these experiences, I decided to organize a Model United Nations conference at my school AISB. I am happy to report that BUDMUN will take place on April 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2010, as the first ever AISB-hosted conference, with participants from five different schools.

The second significant project that I have initiated was inspired by my experience at Brown’s Leadership Institute. As Vice President of my school’s National Honor Society Chapter, I established a Micro-credit service committee. Working through the non-profit organization KIVA, the committee will provide loans to micro-entrepreneurs around the world, giving them the means to support themselves and achieve financial independence.

I am very thankful for skills I obtained at Brown, which aided me in making positive changes in my local environment. Currently I am serving as the President of the student council, a role in which I hope to make more positive change. I have no doubt that what I learned at Brown will stay with me in future projects.