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NEWS RELEASE

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**A NEW FRENCH CONNECTION:
UM ESTABLISHES TIES WITH SENEGAL UNIVERSITY**

MISSOULA—

It's official: The University of Montana—Missoula's informal relationship with the University of St. Louis in the West African nation of Senegal has become a signed cooperative agreement to develop closer ties and explore additional avenues of collaboration.

The memorandum of understanding, signed in St. Louis by UM President George Dennison and USL Rector Ahmadou N'Diaye, follows nearly eight years of cooperative projects and short exchanges between the two universities.

Lauding the milestone, Dennison said "the agreement with the University of St. Louis provides new opportunities for students, faculty and administrators. We have not had an exchange agreement with West Africa before this time, and we needed to have one. We can learn a great deal from such involvements."

USL is a strong and "very stable" liberal arts institution with schools of law and business, said UM French Professor Maureen Curnow, who accompanied Dennison to the historic signing ceremony.

"It is the showcase university in West Africa," she said. And since Senegal is one of about 12 French-speaking countries in West Africa, USL provides exceptional learning opportunities for students and faculty in UM's French program, she said.

The agreement encourages exchanges of faculty, staff and students, cultural-exchange and joint-research activities, special short-term academic programs and participation in seminars and academic meetings as well as joint participation in international training courses. All of the activities will depend upon the availability of funds and approval by the two administrations.

Because neither has made a definite funding commitment to the program, both universities will continue their former policy of seizing opportunities for cooperative projects as they arise, Curnow said. Last year, for example, UM was able to bring two USL professors to campus to replace a UM French professor taking leave without pay.

For a student, doing an exchange at USL is no more complex than at any other foreign university, Curnow said.

"Credit transfer is not a problem," she said, nor is the expense, because the cost of education and living in Senegal is low. But students must be able to take any class and any exam in French, she said.

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