FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 17, 2008

INAUGURAL TOURISM CRISIS MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE THINK TANK MEETING
UF EXPERTS DISCUSS FLORIDA’S RESEARCH CHALLENGES

Gainesville, FL: On January 18, 2008, the leaders of the Tourism Crisis Management Institute at the University of Florida organized its first “Think Tank” meeting. The meeting brought together 14 University of Florida faculty members from different departments and the Dean of the College of Health and Human Performance, Dr. Steve Dorman, to support the vision, mission and the planning process of the Tourism Crisis Management Institute. The President of the University of Florida, Bernard J. Machen, opened the “think-tank” and expressed his enthusiasm and full support of the project. The meeting took place at the Reitz Union and was led by Dr. Pennington-Gray, Director of the Tourism Crisis Management Institute, Dr. Thapa, Associate Director of the Tourism Crisis Management Institute, and Elaine McLaughlin, Director of Strategic Operations for the Tourism Crisis Management Institute.

Fourteen University of Florida faculty members were invited to participate in the project because of their crisis management research experience. The Departments they represented included Engineering, Food and Agricultural Sciences, Advertising, Geography, Building Construction, Geological Sciences and Tourism departments. Additionally, nine Tourism Crisis Management Institute members attended the meeting to brainstorm on the planning process of the Tourism Crisis Management Institute. Participants were asked to generate ideas about gaps in crisis research in all discipline areas that may affect tourism economies.

The brainstorming session was guided by a conceptual crisis model consisting of three crisis phases: (a) pre-crisis, (b) during crisis, and (c) post crisis. This model was used to assist faculty in generating ideas about gaps in crisis research and to assist faculty in determining where their research would fit into the model.

Analysis of content and expert opinion allowed the researchers to identify key themes for all three phases of the crisis model. Five themes emerged from the data:

- Comprehensive crisis definitions and typologies;
- Crisis communication;
- Crisis Assessment and mitigation of travel risk;
- Crisis Training and education;
- Crisis Marketing and promotion.
The meeting concluded with the identification of research questions directly associated with each of the above mentioned areas, which will provide the framework for the next phase of operations for the Tourism Crisis Management Institute. Florida’s tourism economy supports about 964,000 jobs and brings in about $4 billion in tax revenues that provide funding for services enjoyed by Florida citizens.

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Dr. Pennington-Gray at penngray@hhp.ufl.edu or 352 392 3992 X 1318.