



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS PROFESSOR GIVES
A CALL TO ACTION TO HIS STUDENTS**

Houston (Dec. 15, 2006) – In an endless cycle of giving and receiving, 10 student volunteers in the Center for International Studies Program will work with the non-profit organization, Kiva, to give loans to entrepreneurs in third-world countries. These students, with the help of their professor Dr. Rogelio Garcia-Contreras, are working to create the first CIS Microcredit Fund of the University of St. Thomas.

“The value of the project depends on the students’ will and energy for this cause,” said Garcia-Contreras first year UST international studies professor. “Students involved in this project will receive no class credit or income. I offer this project to my students to help them get involved. We talk about issues like poverty, social justice and equality in the classroom but these concepts are never put into action. This is a way to get students to understand these concepts in the real world, and to contribute our grain of sand to try to solve the injustices of this world,” said Garcia-Contreras.

Kiva allows anyone to connect with and loan money to unique small businesses in the developing world. Garcia-Contreras and his team will use Kiva as a tool to assign the microcredits. How it works: you choose a business on Kiva.org and set up a monetary loan for the entrepreneur in the country of your choice. The concept is that by providing these loans you are helping the world’s working poor make successful strides towards economic independence. Kiva partners with existing microfinance institutions and has access to entrepreneurs from impoverished communities world-wide.

Student committee members are responsible for setting up the account, raising the funds and managing the finances. Once money has been raised, the committee will choose where the money will be invested and a loan will be given out to individual entrepreneurs. Garcia-Contreras’ immediate goal is to have \$5,000 in the fund by September 2007.

For now, the CIS fund will be an official lender of microcredits through Kiva; meaning the money loaned through Kiva will come directly from the fund set up by CIS. But Garcia-

Contreras has a bigger goal in mind, to have this fund fully operate on its own without the help of Kiva.

The average microcredit loan amount is \$50. “So, on average, \$500 means 10 loans in 10 different places,” Garcia-Contreras said. “Imagine how much good we can do. We will be impacting the world in a positive way. Now, we aren’t just talking about social change, we are participating in it.”

In the bigger picture, Garcia-Contreras envisions a legacy for future UST student and the Center for International Studies. This is his call to action for both his students and the university. The founders of the CIS Microcredit Fund are setting into motion the concept of social change.

Once the project has been proven successful, Garcia-Contreras hopes to organize a study abroad course that will allow UST students to visit countries where loans have been distributed, as well as allow them to network with entrepreneurs around the world.

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