



PRESS RELEASE
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Academics and Economists Will Inaugurate 'The Cuba Forum' in Washington, D.C.

The Cuban Research Institute (CRI) at Florida International University and the Washington, D.C.-based Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE) will inaugurate "The Cuba Forum" on May 3. "The Cuba Forum" will be hosted at the Brookings Institute in the nation's capital.

The main objective of "The Cuba Forum" is to present information on key policy issues affecting Cuba and U.S. policy toward the island to policymakers, the intelligence community, academics, the media, and the general public.

CRI and ASCE plan to invite national and international experts on different topics and encourage a balance between policy makers and academics. The purpose is to broaden policy debate on Cuba's political, economic, social, environmental, and migration issues and shed new light on them. "The Cuba Forum" will create an atmosphere where multiple perspectives are welcomed and dialogue is encouraged.

Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Economics and Latin American Studies at The University of Pittsburgh will give the inaugural lecture of "The Cuba Forum" on "**Cuba's Economy and Social Welfare in the 21st Century.**" It will take place **May 3, 2004, from 4 to 6 p.m.** at the Brookings

Institute, Stein Room, 1775 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. CRI and ASCE intend to convene “The Cuba Forum” once a month.

The Cuban Research Institute (CRI) at Florida International University (FIU) is the nation’s leading institute for research and academic programs on Cuba and Cuban-American issues. Since its founding in 1991, a combination of advanced scholarship, teaching, outreach activities, and the singular resources of the Greater Miami community have enabled CRI to produce exceptional programs in its field.

Founded in 1990, the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy (ASCE) is a non-profit and non-political professional organization dedicated to the scholarly discussion and research on Cuba. It pursues the study of the Cuban economy in a broad sense, with particular emphasis on the financial, economic, social, legal and environmental aspects of Cuba as it is today and its process of transition.

“The two sponsoring institutions have a proven track record in the study of Cuba and U.S.-Cuba affairs,” said Damián Fernández, director of the Cuban Research Institute and professor of International Relations at FIU. “This is a way to take the resources of the Cuban Research Institute to the nation’s capital. Jointly with ACSE we hope to end the existing disconnect between public policy and academia.”

According to Beatriz Casals, president of ASCE: “Policy debate on Cuba and its comparative development is more relevant today than ever – considering Cuba's current economic crisis, recent political developments on the island, and Fidel Castro's advanced age, change is inevitable, and if we want the process to be peaceful and the result to be democratic, we must redouble efforts now to extend a hand of friendship to the Cuban people and offer a vision of the future.”

For additional information, please contact the Cuban Research Institute at (305) 238-1991 or crinst@fiu.edu or the Association for the Study of Cuban Economy at asce@ascecuba.org.