

Thornton Tomasetti

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thornton Tomasetti Foundation Funds Duke University Engineering Students' Project to Build Bolivian Bridge

(New York – May 14, 2009) – The Thornton Tomasetti Foundation has awarded an \$8,000 grant to a group of Duke University engineering students to help complete a much-needed rural bridge outside the village of Obrajes near Oruro, Bolivia. The bridge is needed to help transport people, crops and livestock from the rural communities of the Iruma River valley to the nearest city to sustain the livelihood of villagers year round.



During the rainy season, flooding of the local river makes connection to the roads leading to the regional capital of Oruro impossible. If executed properly, this small bridge will help these rural communities thrive for years to come, regardless of the weather.

The project was first undertaken several years ago when Dr. Christine Beale, an archaeologist from the University of Hawaii doing site research, brought it to the attention of Duke University's engineering department. In the summer of 2008, students from Duke traveled to Bolivia to take survey data of the region, looking at five sites for a possible bridge. In February 2009, in consultation with the local engineering department, they selected a site near the village of Obrajes because of its proximity to existing local roads and hard rock in the riverbed that would provide stability.

The bridge design took place under the supervision of Dr. David E. Schaad, associate professor of the practice at Duke University, who was instrumental in moving the project forward. The bridge was designed so that it could be easily maintained by the local communities, taking into account access to materials, workers and a strict timetable. An

initial grant of \$8,690 from the Lovino Family Foundation for project costs was contingent on the students receiving funding commitments for the other half of the projected \$17,380 project. The students raised \$1,000 privately and the Thornton Tomasetti Foundation \$8,000 grant ensures the project can now move forward.

“In addition to providing fellowships, scholarships and internships, the Thornton Tomasetti Foundation was also established to support the philanthropic work of individuals and organizations related to engineering, design and technology,” said Richard Tomasetti, chairman of the Foundation. “We are extremely pleased to be able to support the work of these Duke University students in building this bridge, which will mean so much to supporting the livelihood of these Bolivian villagers.”

Three design options were considered for the bridge, which must span the entire riverbed, including a floating bridge design, culvert bridge design and hardened road design. After examining the pros and cons of each design, a modified version of the culvert bridge design was selected, adding concrete beams and columns that offered the best solutions to the problems faced by the local communities.

“A hands-on project such as this allows students to truly apply the principles and theories taught in the classroom and see how they apply to real-life scenarios,” said Patrick Ye, project chair for the bridge team. “This type of experience is invaluable in shaping the problem-solving skills that are so vital in engineering. We are extremely thankful to the Thornton Tomasetti Foundation for making this project possible.”

About the Thornton Tomasetti Foundation

The Thornton Tomasetti Foundation, a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization established in February 2008, has two primary missions including funding fellowships, scholarships and internships for undergraduate students, and those planning to pursue graduate studies in building engineering, design or technology and providing financial support for individuals and organizations pursuing philanthropic activities related to building engineering, design or technology. Key elements of the program are college scholarships, traveling internships, and grants to, and partnerships with nonprofit organizations.