

# THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

**E**xchanges are an essential element in our smart power strategy to maintain and strengthen U.S. global leadership. Exchanges enhance U.S. national security and prosperity by building personal connections, mutual understanding, and productive partnerships that help us address critical global issues: managing the world economy, combating terrorism and regional conflict, and dealing with environmental, public health, and humanitarian challenges.

As recent world events amply demonstrate, a strong military alone is not sufficient to maintain our national security. We need to engage with the world across a wide variety of activities and issues, building respect and a web of partnerships based on shared interests. Exchanges are also an investment in the future, expanding the vision of participating leaders and future leaders. As exchange participants and as hosts, American citizens gain vital exposure to the world and opportunities to develop expertise in critical languages and in foreign societies and cultures.

Virtually all of the money appropriated for exchanges is spent either in the United States or on American citizens who travel overseas. U.S. airlines, academic institutions, hotels, and small businesses in communities throughout the nation benefit from exchange dollars. Exchanges support jobs in all these sectors, and in the vibrant U.S. NGO community.

Comprehensive U.S. global leadership in a wired, interdependent world requires substantial cohort of Americans who not only understand public policy, economics, science, or medicine, but also have the skills and knowledge to navigate effectively across cultures. It also requires foreign leaders who understand and appreciate American society and values.

The State Department's diverse programs allow us to reach Americans and foreign participants at different stages of their lives, and to provide exchange experiences to individuals in a broad range of sectors: students, scholars and teachers, professionals, national and local government leaders, business executives, journalists, scientists, and NGO leaders.

Ann Stock, President Obama's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, said in her confirmation hearing that the 'essential ingredient' in U.S. public diplomacy is the American citizen. There is no more effective way to engage American citizens in our diplomacy than through exchanges.

Studies conducted by the Department of State repeatedly demonstrate the effectiveness of exchange programs:

## EXCHANGES INCREASE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Exchange programs enhance participants' understanding of culture, government, and economy in their host country and create positive opinions that can last a lifetime:

- **98%** of **Fulbright Scholar Program** respondents reported that their Fulbright experiences gave them a deeper understanding of the United States, while 93% believed their experiences heightened their awareness of social and cultural diversity among different nations.
- **97%** of **International Visitors Leadership Program (IVLP)** alumni respondents agreed that the program develops friendly and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries.

- Alumni of the **FREEDOM Support Act Undergraduate Program** believe that they have a much better understanding of U.S. politics (**95%**), culture (**100%**), and economics (**89%**) as a result of the program.

### EXCHANGES CREATE INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Participants in international exchange programs often maintain their friendships and professional relationships after they return home. These relationships extend the impact of exchanges and foster productive international collaboration on key issues:

- **81%** of **Humphrey Fellows** maintain both professional and personal contact with people in the United States and with other Fellows.
- **75%** of U.S. **Fulbright Scholars** have continued to collaborate with host country or institution colleagues

### EXCHANGES FOSTER DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Many exchange visitors to the U.S. return to their home countries with a greater understanding of democracy. These participants are more likely to apply these principles at home and engage in democratic and open practices:

- Nearly all **Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)** Program alumni reported visiting historical sites during their stay (**98%**) and many reported that the most important concepts they learned about during their FLEX experience were American freedom and equal rights.
- After participation in the **Youth Exchange and Study (YES)** Program, over 90% of respondents (all from predominantly Muslim countries) recognize the importance of individual rights such as freedom of religion, access to information, and equality under the law.
- **FREEDOM Support Undergraduate** alumni are significantly more likely to support equal rights for all citizens (**74%**). Alumni are less likely to condone the paying of bribes (**73%**) and less likely to believe it is justifiable to avoid paying taxes (**6%**).

### EXCHANGES IMPROVE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES

Participants of exchange programs often become leaders in government or in their fields:

- **94%** of surveyed participants in the **Youth Exchange and Study (YES)** program say their leadership skills improved as a result of their exchange experience.
- **Fifty-three** current heads of government and chiefs of state are alumni of the **International Visitor Leadership Program**, including President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, President Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa of Mexico and Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

### EXCHANGES ENHANCE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Exchange programs often increase general knowledge and help develop skills that enhance participants' careers either directly or indirectly:

- **95%** of **Hubert Humphrey Fellows** returned home with substantive new knowledge, skills, and abilities leading to the integration of technology into the workplace and adoption of new management practices.
- **Edmund S. Muskie Fellowship** alumni reported increased self-confidence, increased ability to overcome difficulties, increased communication skills, a broadened outlook, and increased tolerance as a result of the program.

*Data Source: Department of State Evaluations (<http://exchanges.state.gov/programevaluations/completed.html>)*