

# THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM (EVP)

## KEY PROGRAM ELEMENTS

- Administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, EVP brings approximately 300,000 foreign participants to the United States each year, all on J-1 visas
- The vast majority of participants are privately funded, expending no USG program funds
- Programs include high school students, university students and scholars, camp counselors, interns and trainees, summer workers, teachers, and au pairs
- Exchange visitor programs vastly increase the number of foreign citizens with the opportunity for a substantive experience in the U.S., and the number of Americans with exposure to foreign counterparts

## PROGRAM DETAILS

The State Department's **Exchange Visitor Program** brings roughly 300,000 foreign participants to the United States each year (the Department issued 313,597 J-1 visas in 2009). These visitors experience the U.S. in a variety of productive ways: as high school exchange students, university students and scholars, teachers, camp counselors, interns and trainees in all sorts of businesses, summer workers at American resorts and parks, and au pairs.

This huge volume of exchange participants – much larger than the number that comes to the U.S. on federally funded programs – costs the American taxpayers virtually nothing. **The overwhelming majority of these programs, carried out under the J-1 visa, are privately funded.** Based on Department of Commerce calculations of the economic impact of foreign students in the U.S., one could estimate the annual benefit of these programs to the U.S. economy at more than \$3 billion.

But the benefits of these exchanges go well beyond dollars and cents. These programs vastly increase the number of foreign citizens who have the opportunity for a substantive experience in the U.S. By offering a broad menu of exchange options, J programs increase the accessibility of a U.S. exchange experience, particularly to those who may not be able to afford to attend an American college or university. These future leaders have the opportunity to live and work side by side with Americans, and return home with a deepened understanding of our values and our culture.

In this age of globalization, the Exchange Visitor Program offers a unique and diverse resource for connecting American homes, schools, campuses, and workplaces with the world. The program reaches and serves an enormous domestic constituency, in every state and Congressional district.

In a 2003 cable, the U.S. Embassy in Warsaw stated, “The Exchange Visitor Programs...allow us to reach a much broader and younger public than we could ever realistically aspire to through our federally funded programs...Sending such a large cohort of university students to the U.S. annually builds a reservoir of goodwill that will support a strong bilateral relationship for decades as these young Poles move into leadership positions throughout society.”

The State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs administers the Exchange Visitor Program. The State Department designates American academic institutions and exchange organizations as program sponsors, and regulates the program.

