
Department of State

Academic Exchange programs: Students, Scholars, Teachers

Academic exchange programs are a cornerstone of American public diplomacy. Students, scholars, and teachers from the U.S. and around the world gain cross-cultural skills, improved language facility, deeper understanding of the host country, and opportunities for teaching, learning, and research projects that extend across borders. These exchanges prepare participants for leadership, and are made even more powerful by the extraordinary multiplier effect they provide, as participants share their perceptions and experiences with their colleagues and students.

STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

By increasing student flows between countries, student exchange programs bolster positive diplomatic relationships and enable both American and international participants to acquire skills that are highly valued in the workforce.

Student exchanges support and enhance the development of language skills among participants, better preparing American and international students to enter an increasingly global workforce:

- More than 80 per cent of employers agree that foreign language proficiency is an important factor to consider when recruiting young college graduates.

Student exchanges provide American and international participants with valuable skills that enhance their employability in their home countries:

- 65 per cent of Fortune 1000 executives agree that knowledge of other cultures and international issues is vital for college and career success.¹
- Students who study abroad exhibit better problem solving, increased creativity, and more complex thoughts than their peers who did not study abroad.²
- Graduates who studied or interned abroad are “half as likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with those who have not studied or trained abroad and, five years after graduation, their unemployment rate is 23 per cent lower³.”

Student exchanges are vital to participating countries’ diplomacy efforts, enabling them to better engage with and understand each other’s nations in the future. Exchanges enhance mutual understanding by exposing participants to the culture and values of the host country beyond what

¹ MetLife survey, 2011 (<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED519278.pdf>)

² Time magazine, 2014 (<http://time.com/79937/how-studying-or-working-abroad-makes-you-smarter/>)

³ Erasmus impact study, 2014 (http://ec.europa.eu/education/library/study/2014/erasmus-impact_en.pdf)

is portrayed in the media:

- 99 per cent of international students studying in the U.S. on the Visiting Fulbright Student Program said that their experiences increased their knowledge and understanding of the U.S. and its culture.⁴
- 100 per cent of American students in the U.S. Fulbright Student Program said their experience helped them to gain deeper understanding of their host country, and 93 per cent gained a deeper understanding of American society and culture after seeing it through the eyes of host country citizens.⁵

Student exchanges are an important area of bilateral partnership, fostering meaningful collaboration between the U.S. and other nations. Student exchange programs have demonstrated leveraging power, with other nations matching the U.S.' efforts to facilitate cultural and educational exchange opportunities. A few examples of foreign governments investing in student exchanges include "Proyecta 100,000" launched by the Mexican government, the Science without Borders program funded by Brazil, and the Fulbright program, which is funded through cost-sharing with 49 countries. In this way, student exchange programs serve as a platform for strengthening international cooperation.

EXAMPLES ON DEPARTMENT OF STATE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS:

- [EducationUSA Student Advising Centers](#) provide local counselors for international students, helping them to apply independently to U.S. universities and colleges. Our modest investment in advising resources supports the robust flow of international students to the U.S., which fosters lifelong global connections and **generates approximately \$30.5 billion annually for the U.S. economy.**
- The [Gilman International Scholarship Program](#) expands study abroad and international internship opportunities for American undergraduate students receiving Pell grants, who otherwise could not afford an international exchange experience. In 2015, students submitted more than 10,000 applications for 2,800 awards. **Gilman** and programs such as **Fulbright** and **Critical Language Summer Institutes** have increased U.S. capacity in Arabic, Persian, Indic languages, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Indonesian, Turkish, and Azerbaijani.
- The **Fulbright Program** provides funding for students to undertake graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and teaching in elementary and secondary schools through the following programs:
 - [The Fulbright U.S. Student Program](#): Offers fellowships for U.S. graduating seniors, graduate students, young professionals and artists to study abroad for one academic year. The Program also includes the *English Teaching Assistant* component.

⁴ Department of State Evaluations (<http://exchanges.state.gov/programevaluations/completed.html>)

⁵ Ibid.

- [The Fulbright Foreign Student Program](#): Enables graduate students, young professionals, and artists from abroad to conduct research and study in the United States. Some scholarships are renewed after the initial year of study.

SCHOLAR & TEACHER EXCHANGES

Scholar and teacher exchange programs are essential elements of foreign policy, uniquely positioned to respond to global challenges. Over the past several decades, international collaboration in research and education has made important global contributions in health, education policy, and diplomacy. In the past two years alone, the world faced a series of challenges that require a united response, including the outbreak of Ebola as well as the continued presence of global terrorism threats, among others. In an increasingly connected world, scholar and teacher exchanges are vital because they create meaningful opportunities for collaboration across borders, cultures, and peoples that expand our knowledge and strengthen our societies, as Betty Castor of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board [explained](#):

“...facing the challenges of the future – and present – requires a concerted effort and the pooling of resources, intellectual and otherwise, across borders.”

Scholar and teacher exchanges create international partnerships that are long lasting and meaningful. International participants in these exchange programs maintain their friendships and professional relationships long after they return home:

- 95 per cent of Fulbright Visiting Scholars have maintained contact with people they met in the U.S. during their grants.⁶
- 75 per cent of U.S. Fulbright Scholars continued to collaborate with their host country or institution colleagues since completing their grants.⁷

The impact of these exchange programs creates a powerful multiplier effect due to the impressive reach of teachers and scholars during their careers:

- 75 per cent of U.S. Fulbright scholars incorporate aspects of the Fulbright experience into courses and teaching methods, and the same proportion gave papers or presentations at scholarly or professional meetings.⁸

Thus, the investments made in these exchange programs pay multiple dividends, impacting not only the teachers and scholars, but also their students, peers at their institutions, and fellow researchers even after completion of the exchange experience itself. Similarly, exchange programs that send American teachers abroad enable these teachers to interact with students

⁶ Department of State Evaluations (<http://exchanges.state.gov/programevaluations/completed.html>)

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

abroad, as well as the teacher's American students after completion of the program, countering stereotypes and increasing mutual understanding from both sides.

In addition to fostering collaboration across borders, scholar and teacher exchanges afford both American and foreign participants numerous opportunities for professional development:

- 98 per cent of Visiting Fulbright Scholars indicated that the program impacted their subsequent publications, gave them greater insight into their professional field, and enhanced their credentials.⁹
- A majority of American Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) reported that their time abroad expanded their skill set (87%), clarified their professional goals (73%), and helped them obtain a new job upon returning home (61%)¹⁰.

In this way, exchange programs hone the skills of both American and foreign participants, increasing their qualifications and employability upon return to their home countries.

EXAMPLES ON DEPARTMENT OF STATE SCHOLAR & TEACHER EXCHANGE PROGRAMS:

- **American overseas research centers** maintain a permanent presence in countries of critical interest to the United States. Each year these centers serve thousands of American students and scholars, building global expertise in American universities and colleges and throughout the public and private sectors.
- The **Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program (TEA)** provides outstanding secondary school teachers of English, social studies, math and science with unique opportunities to develop expertise in their subject areas, enhance their teaching skills and increase their knowledge about the United States. Teachers come to the United States from all world regions for a six-week academic program at a U.S. university graduate school of education, complemented by field experience at a secondary school to engage participants with American teachers and students.
- The **Fulbright Program** provides funding for scholars, teachers, and professionals to undertake graduate study, advanced research, university teaching, and teaching in elementary and secondary schools through the following programs:
 - **The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program**: Sends American scholars, professionals, and artists abroad to lecture and/or conduct research for up to a year.
 - **The Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program**: Brings foreign scholars, professionals, and artists to lecture and/or conduct post-doctoral research for up to a year at U.S. colleges and universities.

⁹ Department of State Evaluations (<http://exchanges.state.gov/programevaluations/completed.html>)

¹⁰ Ibid.

- [The Distinguished Fulbright Awards in Teaching Program](#): Recognizes and encourages excellence in primary and secondary classroom teaching in the U.S. and abroad.
- [The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program](#): Provides opportunities for young English teachers from overseas to refine their teaching skills and broaden their knowledge of American culture and society while strengthening the instruction of foreign languages at colleges and universities in the United States.

