The Innovative GO Teacher Partnership, initially between the Ecuadoran Ministry of Education and Kansas State University, is now a powerhouse for training Ecuadoran English Teachers on several U.S. Campuses.

Rafael Correa Is on a Mission. With two advanced degrees in economics from the University of Illinois, the president of Ecuador said during an interview with U.S. media, "You have the best higher education system in the world, so we have to learn a lot to have revolutionary change." That change begins with Ecuador's teachers. "The Ecuadoran Government has decided to invest in its human talent, considering that is its most valuable resource," according to a statement from the Secretariat of Higher Education, Science and Technology (SENESCYT). Since 2012, the Ecuadoran Government has spent more than $28 million to send 1,045 Ecuadoran teachers to the United States to improve their English and their ability to teach English to Ecuador's children. The Ministry of Education says it understands that "learning English in the entire Ecuadorian public school system is a government priority, as well as a constitutional right, as it opens multiple doors for the most brilliant young minds to study in the best universities of the world." The government also expects the emphasis on learning English to reduce the quality gap between public and private education in Ecuador.
An Ecuadoran teacher teaches English to students in Ecuador.
Ecuador Invests in English

Go Teacher is Ecuador’s answer to the challenge it has given itself. It began as many international programs do—with a phone call to a professional acquaintance. Mona Menking was studying in the United States after growing up in Ecuador, the daughter of Iranian refugees. "I was contacted by a friend at the Ministry of Education with an email that said, 'Something big is going down. Do you want to be part of it?'" Menking asked the same question of Dean Sue Maes at Kansas State University’s Global Campus, who immediately began bringing together staff from multiple departments. Within weeks, everyone was in Ecuador signing a contract that initially called for four months of intensive English training and grew into a comprehensive seven-month program at Kansas State and four of its university partners, New Mexico State University, University of Kentucky, Valparaiso University, and Northern Illinois University. Kansas State’s College of Education has received the AACTE (American Association of College for Teacher Education) Best Practice Award for Go Teacher, among several other awards.

Go Teacher varies in many ways from traditional exchange programs, first in sheer numbers. "It is the only program with so many students coming at once from one country," says Jaishankar Raman, assistant provost for international affairs at Valparaiso University, where one cohort included 59 students. Kansas State has hosted as many as 106 in a single cohort. Ecuadoran students now comprise one of the largest international student populations on the Kansas State campus. "What differentiates this program from many," says Maes, "is that we have working teachers who are already passionate and committed to their profession coming here to K-State, so we get to learn from them." Because the Ecuadorans are coming for professional development rather a junior year abroad, they are not typical 21-year-olds who might be housed in a dorm with 18-year-olds. They are closer to 35 years old, and typically they are leaving families back home. In fact, for José Boroto Carrasco, the hardest part of the program was that, "I really missed my wife," although "her support made it easier and made everything worth the struggle."
Not surprisingly, a video about Go Teacher is titled *Vale la Pena,* or "worth the pain."

Northern Illinois University (NIU) graduated its first cohort of 37 Ecuadoran scholars just this summer. "We were driving the train and laying the tracks as we were moving," said James Cohen, assistant professor of bilingual education and NIU’s Go Teacher director. "Our university never had a system for nonregularly registered students to obtain health care...They had to have access to the library, the recreation center, health services... The whole university had to step up to the plate to make this happen and they did. It's a beautiful thing."

**An Innovative English-language Curriculum**

The curriculum, designed by Socorro Herrera, director of Kansas State’s Center for Intercultural and Multilingual Advocacy, is the same at all participating universities, but each adds its own flavor in extracurricular activities and community involvement. In addition to intensive English classes, the Ecuadoran teachers learn skills and strategies in biography-driven instruction, which taps into individual students' backgrounds, interests, and proficiencies to teach them more effectively and efficiently. In practice, says Carrasco, it "aims to get students comfortable with the use of the language instead of getting them stressed with memorization of rules and grammar." Taking the techniques back to class in Ecuador, he adds, "I see that all of these crazy things really work."

Gabriela Figueroa now asks her students in Ecuador to write down words they already know about a daily theme.

---

**LEARN LANGUAGES FROM THE EXPERTS**

With over 60 years of language expertise, our programs at the renowned Middlebury Institute will help you achieve your language learning goals.

**Summer Intensive Language Program**

- 4.5 hours of instruction every weekday
- Top language instructors with advanced degrees in their fields
- One full year of transferable undergraduate credits
- Free personalized tutoring sessions
- Exciting cultural and linguistic activities that foster learning outside the classroom

**Intensive ESL Program**

- ESL offered fall, winter, spring, summer, and Graduate Preparation in the summer
- Professional teachers with master's degrees in teaching English
- Emphasis on English for success in daily communication, business, and academic study
- Qualify for admission to our partner colleges and universities without the TOEFL or IELTS.

**Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey**

GO.MIIS.EDU/LANGUAGES
Ecuador Invests in English

such as soccer. “They feel safe and confident while writing words in English, Spanish, or Quechua...This strategy awakens their sense for learning at the beginning of a new lesson, and empowers them to be the main actors in the coming learning process.” The strategies she had learned in Manhattan, Kansas, even worked in a school in Ecuador where most of her students were gang members. The students “showed up for class; they started to present homework on time; they started to like working with their classmates and learning with them. They actually asked for this kind of learning technique. Grades improved.” The strategies worked so well that Figueroa has now returned to Kansas State to obtain her master’s degree, an option Kansas State added in January 2014.

Both Figueroa and Carrasco, who also returned for his master’s degree, see themselves in the vanguard of change in Ecuador. “There’s a lot of potential for differentiated instruction and multiple intelligences,” says Carrasco. “I want to be part of that change.” Figueroa sees English as a Second Language as the agent of change.

“With English you can find better jobs, better salary, scholarships to receive higher education, touristic projects that can be started in rural communities, etc.”

Improving How Teachers Teach English

NIU’s Cohen noted that the Ecuadoran teachers were themselves changed. “Up in the highlands there is the native language (Quechua) and the students are having a class in Spanish and learning English. The native language takes on a third-wheel status. But our teachers went back with more understanding, they were less judgmental.” When the teachers go back, all their students may be Ecuadoran, noted Emily Prough, the Go Teacher coordinator at Valparaiso. But the newly trained teachers are asking, “How do students learn differently? How are their home situations different? What abilities or disabilities do they have? That is an eye-opening realization.” Herrera returns regularly to watch her students in action on their home turf. “We come back so excited about
what they do without resources. They have a chalkboard, no construction paper, no markers... They are being driven by the population they are serving rather than the curriculum.

**A Tool to Expand Internationalization on Campus**

Herrera sees Go Teacher as a template for expanded internationalization, proving how universities can benefit from large-scale, short-term programs. Kansas State has already used the template in reverse, sending two groups of 23 U.S. education students to observe and teach for three weeks in Ecuador. “We were actually the ones that went somewhere new, and we were the ones that didn’t speak the language,” said Kansas State student Tess Ostermiller. “I don’t speak Spanish so I got a firsthand perspective of what students feel like when they come here from another country. I couldn’t communicate with other people, and you have to learn how to do other things to communicate—writing, drawing.”

“International exchanges are what we in the United States and other countries need to be truly culturally competent,” and it really teaches us how others think and challenges us to revisit our ethnocentric notion of ‘we are the best.’

**Ecuadoran Scholars Impact U.S. Communities**

The Ecuadorans also changed the U.S. communities where they lived. Each participating university is located in a relatively small, close-knit community. The 37 scholars at NIU descended on DeKalb High School in DeKalb, Illinois, for a single day filled with Ecuadoran culture, dancing, food, and song. One teacher said the students didn’t stop talking about the day for the rest of the school year. Kansas State hosted a Day of Ecuador, with roundtable discussions on education in the global era and a visit from Ecuadoran Ambassador Nathalie Ciely. Through its International Buddies Program, Kansas State
Ecuador Invests in English

pairs each Ecuadoran with someone in the community—bank presidents, retired couples, restaurant owners. Children who had had an Ecuadoran teacher in their class later realized in talking about Galapagos penguins that "oh this is right near where our teacher was. So it's like their world was just opened up with that geography and knowledge and understanding," said Debbie Neuarth, the principal of an elementary school in Manhattan, Kansas, that hosted five Ecuadoran teachers. Manhattan bus driver William Hedgecock went above and beyond to make sure his charges made it to their destinations, knocking on the door of one Ecuadoran's apartment when she had overslept one snowy morning. "They are far away from home and I just show them a little respect and kindness."

"International exchanges are what we in the United States and other countries need to be truly culturally competent," says Herrera, "and it really teaches us how others think and challenges us to revisit our ethnocentric notion of 'we are the best.' When I have a new understanding and respect for a different culture, that makes me a better human being."

Flexibility Is Key

The contract between the Ecuadoran government and Kansas State University has been modified periodically—changing the length of time students spend in the United States and adding more service learning, cultural enrichment, and community involvement. The program has changed from four months to nine and back to seven—January through August. Interested universities bid to join the partnership as subcontractors. "This is a very dynamic program, an outside-the-box project," says Menking, who manages partner relations for Go Teacher. Institutions must be able to be flexible across multiple departments and services. The Ecuadoran students all come with full scholarships from their government, including living expenses, but the university must be able to provide housing, meals, and health services, even during the summer. Valparaiso's Raman also says Go Teacher should fit the school's mission. "Part of our core mission is to be very international. K–12 teachers are not our usual audience. Many of these students don't have the financial means to come here and they go back all over Ecuador, not just to the big cities. We wanted to be part of that activity."

Inspiring Students and Faculty

It is indeed an activity with far-reaching potential. Returning to Ecuador after graduating from Go Teacher, José Carrasco wanted to challenge the status quo of education in Ecuador. He is now completing his master's at Kansas State as the "best way to gain the knowledge, the tools, and the academic background to support and drive this change. When I became a Go Teacher I was able to get a glimpse of how the machine of education worked. The master's program will help me become a cog in this machine and to move forward." Besides, he added, "I kinda love K-State."

Like Ecuador's President Correa, Valparaiso's Jaishankar Raman is an economist. "Often countries will send
engineers and bureaucrats to the U.S. to get some training. Rarely do countries send teachers and much less teachers from rural areas, K−12 teachers, to spend seven months in the U.S. As an economist, that is the right way to spend your money. Each of those teachers will encounter 50 to 100 kids through the academic year. Multiply that by hundreds of teachers through the program—that’s a change that can transform a country.”

As María del Pilar Troya, general secretary of higher education in Ecuador, told a 2014 Go Teacher graduating class, “Your country is waiting with open arms.”

KAREN LEGGETT is a freelance writer in Washington, D.C. Her last article for IE was “The Right Prescription for Internationalization,” about internationalizing pharmacy programs, which appeared in the July/August 2015 issue.

ADVERTISER’S Index

California State University, Northridge ..................... 6
Cleveland State University - ESL Program ................... 19
California State University, Long Beach .................. inside cover
ETS - TOEFL .................................................... back cover
Halladay Education Group Inc .............................. 9
IELTS USA ...................................................... 5
Monterey Institute Language & Professional Programs ........ 13
NAFSA Publications ............................................ inside back cover
NAFSA AC 2016 ............................................ inside back cover
Spring International Language Center .................... 17
Tutorium in Intensive English at UIC ...................... 20

Fayetteville: A great college town in the heartland of the USA with friendly people and gracious hospitality!

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
http://international.uark.edu

University Admissions
• Conditional admissions
• Comprehensive University with Bachelor's, Master's and Ph.D. Programs
• Successful completion of the Intensive English Program meets U of A English proficiency requirements
• Low tuition & low cost of living
• Safe, friendly campus & community surrounded by the great natural beauty of the Ozark Mountains
• Scholarships available

Intensive English Program at Spring International Language Center
• Six levels of instruction
• 25 hours of class a week
• Small classes
• Academic & test preparation
• Study in January, March, June, July, August or October
• Dedicated, experienced, full-time faculty with Master's degrees
• Fully accredited by both CEA and ACCET

Student Services
• Airport pick up service & housing assistance
• Homestay, Campus Residence Halls and Apartment placement
• Conversation Partner Program
• Immigration advising
• Educational, social, cultural & sports activities
• Access to all campus facilities
• Friendly, personal attention

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATOR NOVEMBER + DECEMBER 15 • LANGUAGE SUPPLEMENT