



THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION
for Global Education and Exchange

ADVANCING GLOBAL STABILITY AND U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY THROUGH PEACEFUL EXCHANGE



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Issue Brief on the Importance of Increasing Access to and Diversity in International Education and Exchange Programs

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For nearly 100 years, American leadership, regardless of political affiliation, has recognized the vital importance of people-to-people international exchange programs in bolstering our nation's economy, strengthening our national security, and improving America's status in the world.

In today's interconnected world, where global challenges require global cooperation on solutions, the United States should not retreat from international engagement, but should rather double our efforts to build positive and mutually supportive connections with our neighbors.

America must embrace its role in leading international peace and prosperity by facilitating meaningful, safe, educational exchange in all directions – helping more Americans learn first-hand about other people and cultures and helping more foreign students come to America to experience for themselves the principles upon which our country was built - liberty, democracy, capitalism, and basic human freedom.

America can and should leverage international education, exchange and public diplomacy programs to plant seeds of peace, regain the world's trust, and return to our previous role as a respected leader in global affairs. Leading the effort to bring the world together helps America, Americans, and our vital allies.

We believe the above objectives can be achieved by the United States creating programs and policies that support ambitious goals for international education and exchange such as:

- Doubling the number of international students and exchange visitors (from over one million¹) who study, work, intern, and train in America by 2025, to learn about American values and our ways of life, and return to their countries with a more positive view of our country, our culture and our citizens.
- Doubling the number of high need Americans who study abroad by 2025, to develop the intercultural skills and competencies to compete in the global economy and contribute to solving global challenges.
- Doubling the number of U.S. students studying science and technology abroad by 2025, to return to the US with knowledge and networks that America needs to remain the leader in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM programs), business ventures and discoveries.

¹ IIE's annual Open Doors report cited 1,075,496 international students in the U.S. in 2019/20, including those in academic programs and on Optional Practical Training (OPT). Across all categories J-1 BridgeUSA programs included 335,226 participants according to 2019 Department of State data.

- Increasing resources and opportunities for U.S. students traditionally underrepresented in education abroad: doubling the number of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, first generation college students and increasing the number of LGBTQ+ that study abroad by 2025.²Increase funding to expand virtual and hybrid modalities including standalone programs, adapting in-person exchanges to virtual only, and as part of in-person exchanges so that they are more broadly incorporated into overall student exchange experiences.

PLANTING SEEDS OF PEACE

President Jimmy Carter once said that “Only by knowing and understanding each other’s experiences can we find common ground on which we can examine and resolve our differences,” and there is no better way to understand the experience of someone from another country than by living and learning in that person’s home nation as part of a people-to-people international exchange experience. Mutual understanding between people and nations grows when we send Americans to study abroad, and when we invite foreign students and young professionals to visit the United States to study, train, or work. By renewing our commitment to global engagement through the proven tools of public diplomacy and higher education we can build a more peaceful global community and nurture trust across the world.

Peace Through Public Diplomacy Programs

By inviting the world to visit America to experience first-hand our freedoms, to witness up close our values, and to observe in person our way of life, BridgeUSA programs build confidence and trust in the United States, planting seeds of peace that grow in millions of foreign households for decades to come.

BridgeUSA, formerly the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP), was enacted as part of the 1961 Fulbright-Hays Act and provides the means for hundreds of thousands of foreign students and young adults to visit the U.S. on short-term, temporary visas. These programs provide opportunities for high school and college students, young professionals, teachers, doctors, researchers, and seasoned professionals to experience American culture while pursuing their academic and professional goals. BridgeUSA participants are bright, curious, international students and young professionals who, in most cases, are having their first personal experience of the United States.

² Open Doors reports that 31% of the total 347,099 U.S. students who studied abroad for academic credit in the 2018/2019 academic year, or just over 100,000. Minority participation in U.S. higher education today is 45%. (www.iie.org/en/Why-IIE/Announcements/2020/11/2020-Open-Doors-Report)

During these limited-term stays, students and professionals from over 200 countries learn about democracy, freedom of speech, diversity of thought, and the rich palette of American freedoms that define our great nation. Overwhelmingly, these exchange visitors grow in their respect and admiration for Americans and American values, returning home with new insights and warmth in their hearts for America. In fact, a 2017 study of the J-1 Summer Work Travel (SWT) Program by EurekaFacts reported that 76% of SWT participants have a higher overall regard for the U.S. after the program, and 94% made friendships with Americans during their stay.

One of the most distinctive elements of BridgeUSA programs is that most participants self-fund the experience, even as it provides one of the most impactful cultural transformations for visitors. The programs help American companies access emerging global talent and perspectives and expand their business abroad, but more importantly, also serve to forge a more peaceful world by building bridges of trust between the United States and countries around the world.

Peace Through Higher Education

The intersection of the American higher education system and international cooperation could be framed as our greatest ambassador for peace. Global trust and cooperation can be advanced by invigorating international students' selection of U.S. universities for study, and for the increasing the ability of American students to study abroad.

Research demonstrates that international students who study in the United States overwhelmingly say it was worth the investment, that they gained important intercultural competencies and that the education they received will advance their lives³. As international students return home, they report that their American education is received favorably by employers and advances their careers (ibid). This positive experience within the United States and the cultural knowledge gained by international students has furthered global cooperation in the workplace. In a study during the summer of 2020, Pew found that across 14 countries, including the United States, students and young professionals had a strong desire for global cooperation and the desire was strongest among those who had completed a college degree.⁴

Study abroad helps participants develop intercultural skills crucial for the increasingly global and diverse workplace. The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE), a provider of education abroad programs, recently conducted a survey of their alumni. Nearly all participants reported that they continue to interact with people from different cultures or backgrounds; 93% agreed that their experience taught them to navigate cultural differences; and, perhaps most importantly, alumni reported that study abroad expanded their perspective beyond the confines of the United States, with 94% stating that their experiences increased their interest in international or cross-cultural topics.

³ wenr.wes.org/2019/10/was-it-worth-it-international-student-views-on-the-value-of-their-u-s-education

⁴ www.pewresearch.org/global/2020/09/21/international-cooperation-welcomed-across-14-advanced-economies/

ADVANCING AMERICAN INTERESTS

How Study Abroad Benefits All Americans

According to a 2017 report by IIE, titled *Gaining an Employment Edge: The Impact of Study Abroad on 21st Century Skills & Career Prospects*, studying abroad has an overall positive impact on the development of a wide range of job skills, expands career possibilities, and has a long-term impact on career progression and promotion. Study abroad experiences result in language development, enhanced intercultural skills, flexibility/adaptability, and self-awareness. These highly sought-after emotional intelligence skills are integral to the future of the global workforce and critical to the expansion of America's skilled workforce.

How Public Diplomacy Programs Benefit All Americans

BridgeUSA programs are an excellent tool to support American national security and foreign policy, by giving the United States opportunities for global engagement with current and future leaders in countries key to U.S. interests. Because most international participants self-fund these experiential programs, BridgeUSA is an economically efficient way to bolster our national security interests by providing impactful cultural transformation. BridgeUSA programs such as Summer Work Travel, Intern, Trainee, Camp Counselor and Research Scholar strengthen the U.S. economy, with participants adding around \$30.5 billion to the U.S. economy, while bringing resources to U.S. communities in program dollars and local spending, as well as connections for local businesses.

INCREASING ACCESS TO INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE EXPERIENCES

Recruiting International Students for U.S. Universities

It is the duty of leaders in higher education to clearly articulate a welcome to international students to the United States and to their individual campuses. Recognizing and communicating that campuses seek international students as part of their learning community is a clear acknowledgement that international students bring great value to the learning environment of a university campus.

U.S. higher education leaders should publicly adopt a goal to double their international enrollment and take part in global recruitment, making visits around the world to share news about their campuses with potential students and global communities. In the same way that the United States has invested in global economic development efforts, universities should amplify and leverage their consortiums in the coming years to send visible messages of welcome and value to international students.

The U.S. government can support these efforts by streamlining visa processes, leading a national campaign to educate American citizens about the benefit of international students, and developing resources to assist communities across the United States to provide a welcoming and hospitable environment for newly arrived international students.

Encouraging Participation in Education Abroad

To encourage American students to study abroad, universities should adopt and make transparent a university-wide goal to double global engagement and a series of strategic efforts to reduce barriers that impede reaching that goal. This includes a commitment to provide financial aid to ensure low-income students who are attending the university have the opportunity to study abroad. A commitment to these resources as part of a scholarship offering and embedded in degree pathways are critical so that the decision to study abroad is not perceived as “additive” but as necessary. Even a simple reframing of study abroad during academic advising sessions can stage a commitment to global engagement. For example, an advisor might ask, “When will you study abroad?” instead of “Are you planning to study abroad?”

Campuses and academic programs can ease barriers to study abroad by establishing disciplined-based committees to review curricular challenges that can prevent American students in engineering, science, and technology from studying abroad and meeting their goal of undergraduate degree completion in four years. Through investing in global partnerships with universities around the world that have strong STEM offerings, American students can spend a semester or summer in global study and continue to meet their academic timelines. The ability to work across geographic, political, and cultural boundaries is critical to increasing the competitiveness of U.S. students and their future employers in the global economy.

DIVERSIFYING PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Fewer than 10% of U.S. college graduates study abroad⁵. For too long this has been the realm of privileged, and largely white, students. Those students, who we know are already ahead of their U.S. peers by nearly every metric of success, then gain all of the advantages of international education: language fluency, intercultural awareness, and other skills needed to compete in a global marketplace.

This leaves a gap in the types of students who participate, the voices that are heard during these rich experiences, and how other countries “see” America. Without greater participation by students from diverse backgrounds, the experience is also not as rich for the U.S. participants and a large and growing segment of our citizens will continue to suffer economic disadvantages.

It is critical that all students have these opportunities to fully participate in global education because these experiences prepare them for greater civic participation in our diverse democracy. Students develop the skills, resiliency, and relationships needed to solve global problems in local and international settings and are then prepared for a wide range of careers in an increasingly interdependent world.

Overall participation by students from U.S. institutions in education abroad is low, and participation rates by students of color is lower still, representing 31% of education abroad participants but 45% of overall minority participation in U.S. higher education⁶. These students bring a different type of cultural wealth to the education abroad experience to the benefit of their peers and community partners. Too often, however, this expertise and experience is not valued or validated while abroad.

5 Of 16.6 million undergraduate students at U.S. degree-granting postsecondary institutions as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics in 2018 (nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cha.asp), under 350,000 participate in education abroad each year (OpenDoors, 2020).

6 OpenDoors, 2020 (www.iie.org/en/Why-IIE/Announcements/2020/11/2020-Open-Doors-Report).

Linguistic, social, and navigational capital are but a few of the unique perspectives that students of color bring to the global education experience, drawing on their existing cross-cultural awareness, diverse communication styles, and knowledge and skills about navigation of institutional structures. These transferable skills are applicable to the learning objectives and attitudes cultivated in international exchange and education aboard programs. With further adoption and expansion of this assets-based framing, more students of color may see the value of the international education and/or exchange experience and how they might fit into such experiences. Education abroad professionals and college faculty must be encouraged and supported in their efforts to develop curriculum and policies that encourage students of color to participate fully and successfully in all forms of international education. Doing so brings new perspectives into the experience for all students and also for our international colleagues and partners.

We recognize that the face America presents to the world, through our study abroad programs starting in middle and high school and continuing through the U.S. foreign service and international development corps, is majority white, and in the case of the foreign service, primarily male. Indeed, during the summer of 2020 racial reckoning, multiple media outlets including the New York Times reported on diversity challenges within the State Department. According to a recent Foreign Affairs article, “the top four ranks of the Foreign Service are whiter today than they were two decades ago; only ten percent are people of color... Overall female representation remains roughly the same today as it was in 2000 – still 25 percent below female representation in the wider U.S. labor force.”⁷

This lack of diversity in the ranks of American leadership damages both our effectiveness and our credibility on the global stage. From an effectiveness standpoint, research has proven over the last decade that high levels of diversity in organizations create a competitive advantage. Employee diversity is linked to innovation, better decision making, strong reputation and faster problem solving. Given the vast global challenges our public and private sector leaders are tasked with solving, they are severely constrained by not having a strong reservoir of diversity of thought and experience from which to draw.

⁷ Burns, William J. and Thomas-Greenfield, Linda. “The Transformation of Diplomacy”, *Foreign Affairs*. November/December 2020.

INVESTING IN INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION AND EXCHANGE

At this critical juncture, it is more important than ever that the United States make a tangible investment in global education in order to regain its international reputation as a premier education destination and to increase opportunities for American students to develop critical global leadership competencies.

National Strategy

A robust example of a national investment in internationalization can be found in Canada, our northern neighbors. Canada's comprehensive internationalization strategy entitled, *Building on Success* is an integral part of Canada's ambitious Trade Diversification Strategy: *New Markets, New Customers, New Jobs*. With a 2019 budget allocation of \$147.9 million over five years, followed by \$8 million per year of ongoing funding, Canada's International Education Strategy (IES), is a collaboration between and among the provinces, territories, associations and institutions. Key components of the IES include a five-year Outbound Student Mobility Pilot program which assists post-secondary students with the costs of study or work abroad.

There have been some previous efforts to craft elements of internationalization plans under the Clinton and Obama administrations. The Clinton Administration created International Education Week, by executive order. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education's *Succeeding Globally Through International Education and Engagement*, enunciated in 2012 and 2018, makes manifest a high level of commitment to internationalization, though it does not specify targets. Now is the time to revisit our own lack of a coordinated, national strategy and to operationalize a comprehensive internationalization plan with goals and metrics for achievement supported with appropriate funding and resources.

Investing in International Students

International students should comprise a critical component of a national internationalization strategy that should address overall student recruitment targets, enrollment targets for students studying in certain fields, such as STEM, and clearly articulated goals and messaging about international student contributions to the national economy.

Investing in American Students

The U.S. has not invested heavily in supporting American students who desire to study abroad. As a result, in recent years, other nations have developed a global knowledge advantage over the U.S. by supporting international exchange programs for their citizens. For many years, China has supported over 1,000,000 students to study abroad each year, including sending more than 300,000 to the U.S. alone. Meanwhile, the U.S. sends just 300,000 students abroad each year *in total*. This trend has created a deficit in global knowledge, networking, and leadership by U.S. citizens who are historically our most effective ambassadors. This deficit weakens our competitive economic position and endangers our ability to utilize soft diplomacy to support democracy and advance America's efforts to resolve complex global issues in both the short and long-term.

Therefore, for domestic students, an internationalization plan should have as a primary goal an increase in the number of students participating in experiences abroad, thus preparing these students to be informed global citizens and respected ambassadors for the American values. Special consideration must be given to diverse and under-resourced students for whom study abroad opportunities are not financially feasible or for whom current structures are inadequate or inaccessible.

Increasing Diversity and Promoting Equity by Thinking Beyond Study Abroad

America must strive to provide more on-ramps to global education and engagement for a much broader swath of the population, starting at earlier ages. We have been heavily reliant on international mobility as the primary vehicle for developing global skills and competencies. We forget that we have incredible resources at our fingertips to help young people develop an appetite for global experiences. With over one million international students on our campuses, millions of international faculty, not to mention the vibrant immigrant populations in our communities across the country, we can be engaging these resources more regularly to build higher levels of exposure, curiosity, and commitment to global education.

Technology can also be a tool to link students to their counterparts abroad. But we must also start making those global connections through greater intentionality on campuses through global residential experiences, language communities, and mentoring programs connecting people from different backgrounds regularly to explore commonalities and differences of experiences. These steps are low-cost and low-effort initiatives that can go a long way toward building a much more robust, diverse and inclusive pipeline of global leaders who are effective and can bring credibility back to democratic values.

Increasing Access by Expanding Work-Based Programs

Work-based exchange programs, including those under the umbrella of BridgeUSA, promote broader access to opportunity by allowing participants to offset some of their costs. For most international BridgeUSA participants, spending a semester at a U.S. institution is out of reach financially, but they can spend the same amount of time in the U.S. while being allowed to work, train or intern. This opens up the experience to students from countries and backgrounds not often seen on U.S. college campuses: top sending countries for Summer Work Travel currently include Romania and Turkey. In addition to expanding these programs, U.S. policy makers should also consider reciprocal programs that would allow young Americans to work or intern abroad, currently only offered in four countries.⁸ Work-based programs provide professional experience and often the same level of cultural engagement found in a classroom setting.

CONCLUSIONS

In the first decades of the 21st Century, we have witnessed the ways that international cooperation is integral to maintaining national security and a robust economy. Global problems, from terrorism to disease, require global solutions. Global solutions require a population and a workforce with the skills to adapt to an ever-changing and increasingly connected world. These are precisely the skills and connections that are cultivated through international education and exchange in both directions, by U.S. students going abroad and by welcoming international students and young professionals to the U.S. As international educators, we recognize our own responsibility to ensure that all students, regardless of background, can enjoy the transformational power of educational exchange and that they graduate prepared for the kinds of globally competitive jobs that drive our nation's success.

Through public-private partnership, investing in broader access to international education and exchange, and a broad cultural shift emphasizing its importance, America's future leaders will have the language and cross-cultural skills to cross borders with ease; and they will forge lasting relationships with friends and neighbors from other cultures to build a more collaborative and secure global community. International education and exchange programs can and should be the cornerstone of efforts to bring the world together in peace and prosperity. We call on the U.S. government and higher education leaders across the nation to make an investment in developing a national strategy and supporting it with sufficient resources so that we might build a stronger foundation upon which to achieve the peaceful world we all seek.

⁸ There are work-based programs open to Americans and similar to Summer Work Travel that allow participants to earn income in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore.

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