



The Public Diplomacy Council

FY 2008 U.S. Department of State Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs

May 31, 2007

Public Diplomacy Council
Suite 410, 805 21st St NW
School of Media and Public Affairs
The George Washington University
Washington DC 20052

Tel (202) 944-0389
Fax (202) 994-5806
Email PDI410@gwu.edu

FY 2008 U.S. Department of State Educational and Cultural Exchange Programs

The Public Diplomacy Council strongly recommends that the Congress

1. Enact President Bush's budget request of \$486 million for FY 2008,
2. Increase the investment in State Department Exchange Programs to \$500 million, to further strengthen U.S. public diplomacy, and
3. Develop a multi-year plan to double the number of people who participate in State Department sponsored exchange programs each year.

Background: The recently completed FY 2007 appropriations bill includes \$445.275 million for the educational and cultural exchange programs of the U.S. Department of State. The Administration has requested \$486.4 million in exchange program funding for FY 2008. The Public Diplomacy Council strongly supports the President's budget request. If additional funds are available, the Council urges an increase to \$500 million in order to deepen the public diplomacy impact of these important programs and to sustain and strengthen the State Department's core exchange programs worldwide while continuing to develop new, carefully selected initiatives.

Rationale:

- **A review of 29 reports on public diplomacy revealed that the most common recommendation of these reports is to increase exchange program funding.**
- **A survey conducted by Zogby International revealed that 74 percent of likely voters are concerned about the declining reputation of the United States abroad.**
- **Polls, academic reports, and government surveys document rising anti-Americanism, even in nations we count among our closest allies. A recent BBC report indicates that only 29 percent of those polled in 25 countries believe that the United States exerts a mainly positive influence on the world, compared with 40 percent of those polled two years ago. We are clearly losing ground in world public opinion.**

The face to face encounters and learning exchange programs produce a proven means to counter those negative perceptions. This applies not just in the Muslim world but around the globe. To address terrorism and other critical global problems effectively, we need the cooperation of our friends and allies in every region of the world. Funding is urgently needed for a variety of targeted exchange programs, some new and others that have proven their success for decades:

- **In repeated surveys, U.S. Ambassadors rank the **International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)** as the most valuable public diplomacy tool at their disposal. Funding for this program that builds viable relationships between foreign leaders and their U.S. counterparts is spent in the United States. That funding leverages more than \$14 million raised in 90 U.S. communities across the United States. This does not include the immense value of the volunteer hours contributed by the private sector partners of the Department of State to the administration of the IVLP. Many distinguished IVLP alumni have become heads of state and chiefs of government. Alumni include Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai (1987), British Prime Minister Tony Blair (1986, 1992), and the new French President Nicolas Sarkozy (1985).**
- **Since 1947 the world-renowned **Fulbright Program** has provided scholarships for more than 279,500 participants, chosen for their outstanding academic achievement and leadership potential, in the United States and around the world. Fulbright alumni include Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, governors and senators, and prime ministers and heads of state. Other critical academic exchange activities include **Overseas Student Advising Centers** and the**

Gilman International Scholarship Program. With a \$5 million appropriation, Overseas Student Advising Centers contribute to an annual \$13 billion trade surplus generated by foreign students in the United States. Foreign students enliven U.S. communities and classrooms, and take a first-class education home to assume positions of leadership. The **Gilman International Scholarship Program**, funded at \$3.9 million in FY 2007, expands study abroad opportunities for American undergraduate students receiving Pell grants. Last year, students submitted 2,195 applications for 777 awards available. The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs is no longer giving the grants that enabled U.S. colleges and universities to forge new linkages with universities abroad.

- **Islamic exchange initiatives** promote increased respect, understanding, and trust between Americans and people of the Islamic world. The Department of State has created a continuum of programs to reach out to Muslim participants, particularly diverse and underrepresented populations. One example is a program that provides micro-scholarships to stimulate in-country English study by teenagers. The **Youth Exchange and Study program (YES)** brings high school students from the Islamic world to live with American families and attend American schools for an academic year. For the 2006-07 academic year, 675 students from 25 countries, the West Bank and Gaza participated. The Department of State has devised a variety of undergraduate exchanges including summer institutes, community college programs, and semester and year-long programs at four-year institutions, and expanded **Humphrey** fellowships for the Muslim world. Under the **National Security Language Initiative (NSLI)**, the Department of State has used summer institutes and existing programs such as **Fulbright** and **Gilman** to increase U.S. capacity in Arabic, Farsi, and Indic languages. The **International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP)** has targeted 'key influencers' in predominantly Muslim nations, bringing hundreds of clerics, journalists, and women and student leaders to the United States for programs emphasizing tolerance, interfaith dialogue, diversity, and leadership development. These programs have had remarkable and consistent impact. U.S. embassies would welcome more funding for these programs.
- **Citizen exchanges** encourage Americans in communities across the country to develop enduring relationships with their counterparts abroad. By engaging the American public, citizen exchanges literally democratize the conduct of our foreign policy and build bridges of understanding at the local level. Additional funding for citizen exchanges will leverage broader public participation.
- **Funding for exchanges with Eurasia and Eastern Europe** has dramatically declined in the last several years, even as on-going transitions and challenges to democratic change capture international headlines. These valuable programs foster personal and professional relationships among Americans and citizens of these critical regions of the world. They have demonstrated success in molding future leaders and positive attitudes toward the United States and its values. We need to sustain our engagement with these important nations that are still emerging from decades of totalitarian leadership.

The United States requires a complementary mix of viable exchanges in each region of the world if our public diplomacy is to be successful. Additional exchange program participants from countries in Latin America and Asia are desperately needed to strengthen U.S. impact in those regions. Exchanges are a long-term investment in U.S. national security.

Given the size of the U.S. Population, and the pivotal role the United States plays in the world, there is a pressing national need to increase significantly the number of people who annually participate in international exchange programs. Department of State exchange programs help develop constructive international relations and build a globally-savvy workforce so imperative if we are to compete and lead effectively in the 21st century.