

GLOBAL EDUCATION RESEARCH REPORTS



Broadening Opportunities for Study Abroad

U.S. Government Funded Scholarship Programs

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Foreword

Study Abroad Provides Critical Skills for Americans and Supports Our National Security and Economic Prosperity

The United States Government is committed to more young Americans gaining the international and intercultural skills to ensure their own personal success and to maintain U.S. leadership and competitiveness. As Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said about American students studying abroad, “Let’s work together to provide more such opportunities to Americans of all backgrounds.”

As a nation, it is imperative that we work together to ensure that more American students have the life-changing and career-enhancing experience of studying overseas. Not only do we need more Americans studying abroad, but those who study abroad need to fully reflect the rich diversity of the United States. Employers benefit from diversified workforces with international skills and perspectives. In 2017, the Institute of International Education (IIE) published, *Gaining an Employment Edge: The Impact of Study Abroad on 21st Century Skills & Career Prospects in the United States* which detailed how study abroad fostered the development of 21st century job skills.

According to the 2018 QS Global Employer Survey, international experience ranks third for employers among their top five recruitment priorities. The report pointed to the development of soft skills, such as adaptability and resilience, as being equally important as technical skills among employers – exactly the skills that study abroad fosters. Studies like the Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI), which was funded by the U.S. Department of Education, point to the increased graduation and retention rates for students who study abroad. No less important is the benefit to the U.S. national interest, particularly with respect to meeting the current and projected needs of American diplomacy, commerce, and national security.

The State Department supports a wide variety of programs to provide study abroad opportunities for American students to gain critical skills that advance their own personal and professional development and support our country’s national security and economic interests. Each year the U.S. Department of State sends more than 7,000 American students abroad through the **National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y)**, **Critical Language Scholarship Program**, **U.S. Fulbright Student Program**, and **Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program**. These programs seek to grow the pool of Americans studying abroad, to expand the destinations where Americans study, and to support the acquisition of and proficiency in critical languages. The State Department also supports U.S. colleges and universities offering study abroad opportunities and bolsters the capacity of foreign higher education institutions to host Americans through capacity-building initiatives and small grants. A complete list of programs that support American student mobility can be found at **studyabroad.state.gov**.

We are gratified that overall study abroad by American students is at an all-time high, with 341,751 U.S. students studying abroad for academic credit in 2017/18 according to the 2019 *Open Doors Report*, funded by the Department of State. The profile of American students who are studying abroad continues to diversify; 30 percent of study abroad students in 2017/18 identified as a member of a racial or ethnic minority group, compared to 18.2 percent in 2007/08. The destinations where students choose to study has also expanded, ensuring that more citizens around the globe are engaging with more young Americans who reflect the diversity of our country. Even with these record achievements, only approximately ten percent of U.S. undergraduate students are taking advantage of study abroad opportunities prior to graduation, meaning that 90 percent of American students do not take part. And we all still have work to do to ensure that the profile of Americans studying abroad reflects U.S. higher education overall.

Thanks to robust efforts by the U.S. higher education community, the State Department's EducationUSA network and exchange programs, and the work of Fulbright Commissions and other stakeholders, more than one million international students are studying in the United States, making it the top host destination globally. These international students bring the world and diverse perspectives to American campuses, exposing U.S. students to new viewpoints and cultures they will need to understand as they enter the globally connected marketplace.

We continue to strive to expand student mobility both from and to the United States. Working together, we can provide more opportunities for international experiences to our young people and prepare them to serve as leaders and innovators who will benefit American security and prosperity and engage effectively with the world.

Caroline Casagrande
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State



Introduction

U.S. international educational exchange has diversified in the past decade – from the profile of students going abroad to the destinations that host U.S. students and the types of experiences students engage in while overseas. Further, additional research has emerged documenting the value and impact of study abroad, as well as gaps in access and equity (Hurley, Lowe, Graham, & Hanks, 2016; Rubin, Sutton, O’Rear, Rhodes, & Raby, 2014). U.S. government-funded scholarships to support overseas learning for U.S. students have both adapted to and helped to shape this changing landscape. In examining U.S. government scholarship programs, three overarching goals are evident: encouraging citizen diplomacy, strengthening national security, and building a globalized workforce.

Goals of U.S. Government Scholarship Programming



This paper explores U.S. government scholarship opportunities available to U.S. students interested in an international experience, highlighting different sponsoring agencies and the scholarships and their relationships to the three goals that were the focus of this research. IIE’s Research, Evaluation & Learning Unit collected primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative data through interviews with program administrators and alumni, program evaluations, and longitudinal data sets. Although the paper does not detail every U.S. government scholarship opportunity in full, the case studies presented in this paper demonstrate the contributions of U.S. government scholarship programs to study abroad and the international experiences of U.S. students.

Encouraging Citizen Diplomacy

Spreading U.S. culture, ideas, and values through everyday people-to-people exchanges is at the foundation of U.S. government international scholarship programs. As such, a goal of many scholarship programs is, through mutual exchange, to break down the barriers of distance and bias. U.S. government scholarship programs that encourage citizen diplomacy are designed in a way that allow participants to engage with communities and leverage their personal background to develop relationships and dispel common stereotypes.

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) aims to play a leadership role in public diplomacy through its scholarship programs. ECA opportunities emphasize the role of students and scholars to “serve as citizen ambassadors, representing the diversity of the United States abroad, dispelling stereotypes about Americans...” and notes that through community engagement, grantees “will interact with their hosts on a one-to-one basis in an atmosphere of openness, academic integrity, and intellectual freedom, thereby promoting mutual understanding” (U.S. Department of State).

Diplomacy is the cornerstone of the **William J. Fulbright U.S. Student Program**, the U.S. government’s flagship international educational exchange program. Through legislation introduced in 1946 at the end of World War II by Senator J. William Fulbright, the Fulbright Program was designed to promote “international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science” (Fulbright U.S. Student Program). The program awards approximately 2,000 grants annually in all fields of study and operates in more than 140 countries. Fulbright U.S. students come from all 50 states, representing all regions of the country and enabling Fulbrighters to represent the United States as cultural ambassadors as they seek to build mutual understanding and appreciation of others’ viewpoints and beliefs.

Impact data from alumni of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program indicates that participants consider themselves cultural ambassadors in their host and home communities. Fulbright alumni learned about their host communities outside of the United States and shared these experiences when they returned home. A survey of 2018 Fulbright alumni indicates that 90 percent of alumni felt that the Fulbright experience helped to strengthen relations between the United States and their host country and 95 percent of alumni improved their ability to function in a multi-cultural environment (IIE, 2019b). As a result of their Fulbright experience, almost all alumni learned about the daily life (96 percent) and cultural values (99 percent) of their host

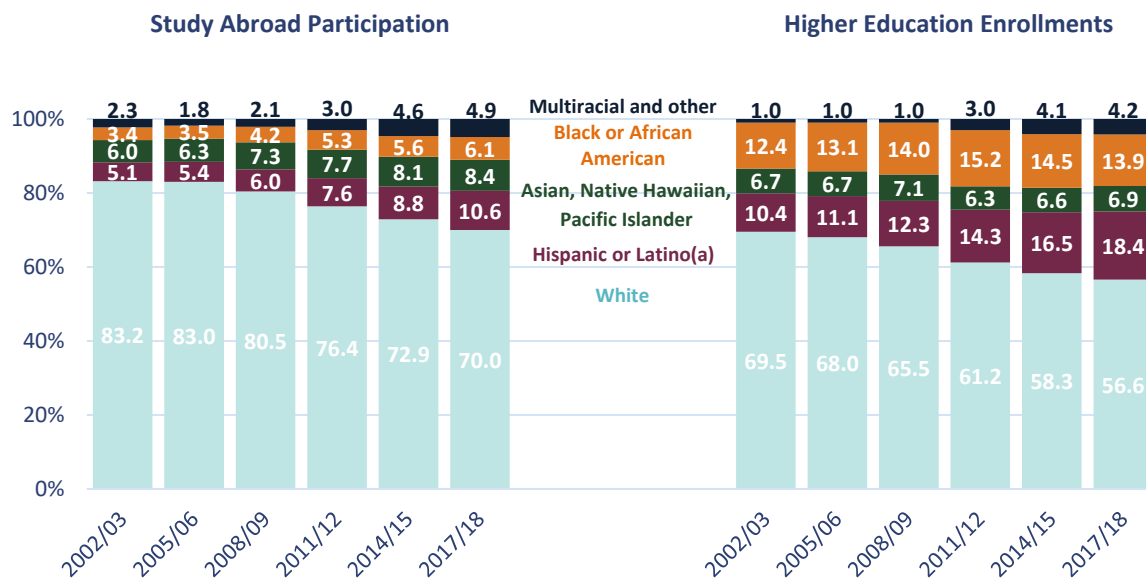
I am still surprised by how much I learned about myself and American culture during my time in Poland. I am constantly reminded of similarities and differences, and I do my best to share these with others in the hope that they will also start reflecting on their views of cultural understanding.

— **U.S. Fulbright Student to Poland (2017)**

countries (IIE, 2019b). Finally, Fulbright alumni considered themselves to be successful ambassadors of the United States in their host countries. A majority of respondents (86 percent) indicated that as a result of interactions with the alumni, people in their host countries had an increased interest in U.S. culture (IIE, 2019b).

U.S. government-sponsored scholarship programming provides international opportunities to a broader diversity of students than have historically had the access or opportunity to study abroad. Longitudinal data from IIE’s *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*¹ (Figure 1) shows that over the past 15 years, participation in study abroad by students who identify as an ethnic or racial minority has increased from 17 percent in 2002/03 to 30 percent in 2017/18. Growth is most notable among students identifying as Hispanic or Latino(a) and multiracial, with percentages more than doubling in these categories from the 2002/03 academic year to 2017/18. However, when compared with the overall U.S. higher education population, 44 percent of all U.S. students identify as a racial or ethnic minority. Therefore, making study abroad opportunities available and accessible to students from all backgrounds remains a priority.

Figure 1: 15 Years of Racial and Ethnic Representation in Study Abroad and U.S. Higher Education



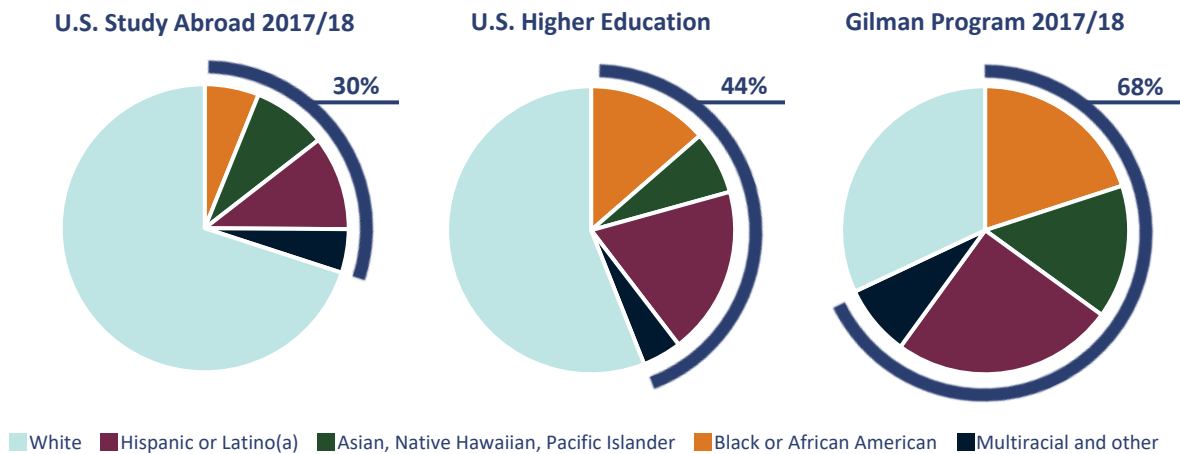
Source: *Open Doors, 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, Table 306.30*

¹ *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange* is a comprehensive information resource on international students and U.S. students studying abroad. It is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and is published by IIE. For more information, visit www.iie.org/opendoors.

Promoting access and equity in outreach and recruitment for U.S. government scholarship programs aims to ensure that the students who apply and are selected for international scholarships reflect the racial, ethnic, economic, and geographic diversity of the United States. Two notable U.S. Department of State programs have increased the diversity of U.S. citizens engaged in citizen diplomacy efforts overseas by supporting specific underrepresented groups.

The Department of State’s **Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program**, established in 2001 as part of the International Academic Opportunity Act, supports students with limited financial means to study or intern abroad. Since inception, more than 30,000 U.S. undergraduate students of limited financial means were awarded scholarships to study or intern abroad through the Gilman Scholarship Program, receiving as much as \$5,000 to spend up to one year abroad (Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, 2019). Through targeted outreach and recruitment, the Gilman Scholarship Program has effectively diversified the students who go abroad, with 68 percent of Gilman Scholars coming from underrepresented backgrounds (Figure 2) and 47 percent identifying as first-generation college students (Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, 2019). More than half of all Gilman Scholars select a less traditional destination outside of Western Europe, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand for study.

Figure 2: Comparison of Racial and Ethnic Representation, 2017/18



Sources: *Open Doors, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics, 2017*

Evaluations of the Gilman International Scholarship Program highlight its impact on scholars’ global competencies, including mindsets that support ECA goals of building mutual understanding through study abroad. A 2019 program evaluation indicated that 96 percent of Gilman Scholars were better able to approach conflict or challenges with an open mind due to their experience abroad. Additionally, 94 percent agreed that they were more able to relate to

people from other cultures and backgrounds as a result of their Gilman-supported experience (IIE, 2019a).

My study abroad program was history oriented. I studied both American history, the history of Belgium, and World War One. It's one thing to sit in a classroom and learn about the historical battles and sites of WWI, but being able to visit them brought the history alive. By studying the American character in Europe, I was constantly reevaluating my role as an American and what it means.

— *Gilman Scholar to Belgium (2018)*

Nine out of ten Gilman Scholars shared their experiences while abroad, speaking to local communities, individuals, and institutions about the United States and the Gilman Scholarship Program. For example, a Gilman Scholar who was overseas during a U.S. presidential election explained the electoral process to her host community. Her efforts to foster learning and understanding helped her learn cultural diplomacy (Manley & Martel, 2019).

The U.S. Department of State's **Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program**, a career entry program for the U.S. Foreign Service, diversifies the students engaged in internships overseas, as well as the type of U.S. students to which host countries are exposed, implicitly breaking barriers and stereotypes and building mutual understanding. During the two-year program, students earn a master's degree from a U.S. institution and participate in two internships, one in Washington DC and the other at an overseas embassy or consulate. These professional development experiences in the United States and overseas prepare students to fulfill their five-year commitment to the U.S. Foreign Service upon graduation.

The Pickering Fellowship “continues to ensure that the Foreign Service reflects the face of America to foreign audiences” and supports students based on financial need, who represent ethnic, gender, social, and geographic diversity and will pursue a Foreign Service career in the U.S. Department of State (Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship Program). The goal for diversity is “based on the fundamental principle that diversity is a strength in our diplomatic efforts.” The Pickering Fellowship Director at Howard University (which administers the program under a cooperative agreement with the Bureau of Global Talent Management, Office of Talent Acquisition), Dr. Lily López-McGee, commented on the diversity of participants, including that they studied at both U.S. public and private institutions, small and large, and east to west (L. López-McGee, personal communication, December 10, 2019). In the most recent application cycle, the 30 selected fellows represented 30 institutions across the United States. This diversity has, in turn, increased the diversity of professionals in the U.S. State Department's Foreign Service, making U.S. diplomacy to be more fully representative of the United States.

Strengthening National Security

Strengthening national security is another goal underlying many U.S. government-sponsored scholarship opportunities, including a variety of programs related to national security that were created in the post-9/11 era. In this period, federal agencies focused on creating and expanding scholarship programs to increase cultural and linguistic fluency in an effort to strengthen national security. Even prior to 9/11 the U.S. national security community, along with the private and non-profit sectors, were vocal about the dearth of individuals with high-level language proficiency skills (Nugent & Slater, 2017). The related goal of promoting multilingualism further allows U.S. citizens to promote and spread the ideals of freedom and democracy in languages that can be understood by all (Morse & Bullock, 2006).

Several U.S. Department of Defense scholarship programs – such as **The Language Flagship**, **Boren Awards**, and **Project Global Officer (Project GO)** – as well as U.S. State Department programs, such as the **Critical Language Scholarship (CLS)**, draw a clear connection between strengthening U.S. national security and improving language skills in “critical” or “strategic” languages and regions.² This long-term investment in the capabilities of U.S. citizens is essential to fulfilling the national need for individuals with language skills (Nugent & Slater, 2017) and for preparing students “to meet the challenges posed by increasing global interaction among nations” (The David L. Boren National Security Education Act 1991: 1).

The Language Flagship was designed to create pathways to professional language proficiency in critical languages for students of all majors to support national security (Nugent & Slater, 2017). The programs offer a variety of scholarships to students for study abroad throughout their academic career, including summer intensive language programs, year-long capstone experiences that include internships in the target language, as well as opportunities to direct enroll at an overseas institution. In the 2017/18 academic year, more than 400 Language Flagship students participated in an overseas immersive language and culture learning experience with 149 demonstrating advanced level skills (Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) level 2 or above)³ in speaking prior to commencing their year-long capstone program (National Security Education Program (NSEP), 2018).

Created under the National Security Language Initiative⁴ to increase the number of U.S. students learning a critical language, the **Critical Language Scholarship** Program has supported more than 7,000 students since inception on immersive overseas language programming in 15 languages critical to national security and economic prosperity. CLS scholars build relationships with the

² Languages critical to the economic and security needs of the United States are commonly referred to as critical or strategic languages. The Department of Defense maintains an official Strategic Language List that is reviewed and updated annually. The list “informs the selection of priority languages for National Security Education Program (NSEP) awards along with other practical considerations for study abroad” (NSEP, 2018).

³ Detailed information about the ILR scale and proficiency level descriptions can be found at www.govtilr.org/Skills

⁴ In 2006, the U.S. government established the National Security Language Initiative through a partnership among four federal agencies (U.S. Departments of State, Defense, and Education and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence) which created and expanded programs to increase cultural and linguistic fluency in order to strengthen U.S. national security.

people in their host communities through communication and understanding; one on one connections with language partners serves to support this goal. Over the last 10 years, CLS scholar language proficiency assessments have demonstrated an average two sublevel gain on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) scale post-program.⁵ In addition, more than three quarters of CLS scholars continued studying their CLS language at the conclusion of the program (Critical Language Scholarship, 2020).

Scholarship programs aiming to strengthen national security are focused on not only the language proficiency skills of scholarship recipients but also the development of their regional and area studies knowledge. Award recipients travelling to destinations where the official or dominant language has been identified as critical or strategic to national security often find themselves among a small group of individuals with expertise in a destination or region deemed less traditional. The Language Flagship, Boren Awards, and Project GO require recipients to select destinations for study outside of Western Europe, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand. CLS recipients go to locations where these languages are widely spoken, mainly in non-traditional destinations for study abroad.

These programs develop skilled alumni ready to join the workforce where their language, regional, and cultural skills are in demand. Authorized by the National Security Education Act and sponsored by the NSEP, the central mission of the **Boren Awards** is to “provide the U.S. government with experts in languages critical to U.S. national security” (Boren Awards, 2019). Boren awardees commit to fulfilling a service requirement that obligates recipients to work for the U.S. federal government for one year. As such, the Boren Awards seek applicants who express interest in a long-term career with the U.S. federal government and can describe how Boren Awards funding to study overseas will support their career goals and development as a leader in the federal workforce. Boren Awards give preference to applicants proposing to spend longer durations abroad as duration abroad positively affects language gains (Mason, Powers & Donnelly, 2015).

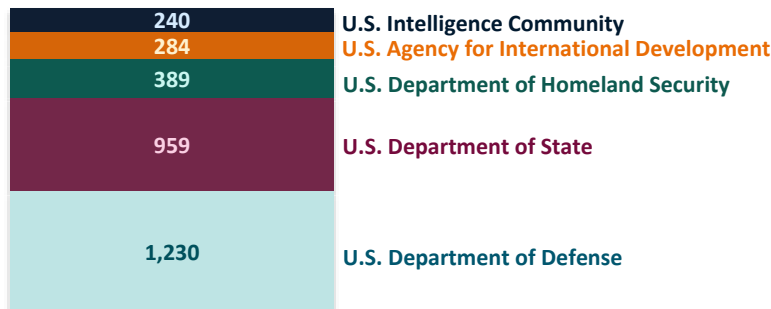
I used my language and culture skills all the time in my job. There are so many aspects to language learning that you just cannot get without immersing yourself in the culture, and that wouldn't have been possible without the Boren funding. I knew I wanted to pursue a career in government, and the Boren was the perfect fit.
— **Ben Orndorff, Boren Fellow to Egypt (2011)**

The NSEP 2018 Annual Report shows that student commitment to study in an overseas immersive environment resulted in positive language gains with 73 percent of Boren Scholars

⁵ Detailed information about the ACTFL scale and proficiency level descriptions can be found at www.actfl.org/publications/guidelines-and-manuals/actfl-proficiency-guidelines-2012

and 77 percent of Boren Fellows achieving an ILR score of 2 (limited working proficiency) or higher in 2018 (NSEP, 2018). The program is also successful in providing support for linguistically and culturally competent alumni to secure positions in the federal government, with many Boren alumni serving in agencies identified as priority agencies responsible for ensuring national security by the U.S. Department of Defense (Figure 3).

Figure 3: NSEP Service in Priority Agencies



Source: NSEP, 2018

Boren Fellow Ben Orndorff described his Boren experience as crucial to his ability to develop critical language skills as well as land his “dream job” directly following completion of his master’s degree (B. Orndorff, personal communication, December 6, 2019). Because of the support he received in being introduced to offices and agencies within the federal government, he found a position at the Office of Naval Intelligence within the U.S. Department of Defense. He credits much of his success to the Boren Fellowship, describing it as an opportunity that fits “go-getters” like himself who are interested in government careers and will take the initiative to really immerse themselves in the overseas experience.

In addition to The Language Flagship and Boren Awards, the U.S. Department of Defense made a strategic decision to invest in the language skills and regional expertise of future military officers. Project GO was launched in 2007 as part of the Defense Language Transformation Roadmap to strengthen the language, regional expertise, and intercultural communication skills of future military officers. Project GO provides domestic and overseas language and culture training to Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) students.

Project GO has provided funding to more than 5,600 ROTC students, and it is “the only source of funding available exclusively for Army, Naval, and Air Force ROTC students to study critical languages domestically during the summer and is the most accessible and flexible source of funding for summer language study overseas” (NSEP, 2018). The program has been successful in achieving language proficiency goals; by 2018, 93 percent of Project GO scholarship recipients who completed four or more semesters of language study achieved a post-program ILR score of 1 or above (elementary proficiency) (NSEP, 2018).

Having a working knowledge of the complex political, religious, and social nuances of the Middle East and Central Asia has repeatedly enabled me to develop training that informs soldiers about a part of the world that is generally unfamiliar to them. Having a good understanding of the culture in our operational environments is paramount to mission success, and I count this as one of the greatest benefits of Project GO.

— Army First Lieutenant Blake Lemmons, Project GO Dari language student (2011)

U.S. government investment in the language and regional skills of students is focused on developing the skills necessary for the U.S. federal workforce, and future employment in positions with national security responsibilities. Several of the previously mentioned scholarship programs are actively promoted to high school recipients of the **National Security Language Initiative Youth (NSLI-Y)** and **Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study Abroad (YES Abroad)** awards. Although not the primary focus of this paper, the connection between these programs is noteworthy because they serve as pipeline programs that leverage the early exposure and training in critical languages that NSLI-Y and YES Abroad students receive and seek to further advance the proficiency levels of these students. Since inception, more than 6,500 high school students have participated in a NSLI-Y program with 82 percent of alumni respondents to a 2018 survey indicating that they have continued to study the target language post-program (NSLI for Youth Alumni Survey, 2018). YES Abroad Alumni are encouraged to join an alumni network of more than 12,500 YES and YES Abroad alumni. The network shares information about opportunities for additional study abroad funding as well as activities that build on the program core principles of community service and citizen responsibility (U.S. Department of State).

Building a Globalized Workforce

International education research in the past decade has increasingly focused on the connection between study abroad and employability, and some U.S. government-funded programs focus primarily on this goal. According to IIE's 2017 report entitled *Gaining an Employment Edge: The Impact of Study Abroad on 21st Century Skills & Career Prospects in the United States*, students who studied abroad felt that they had increased cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal skills that would help them become more prepared for careers in a modern workforce, including "intercultural skills, curiosity, flexibility and adaptability, confidence, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, communication, problem solving, language, tolerance for ambiguity, and course or major-related knowledge" (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017). The same study found that these skills not only expanded students' career possibilities but also positively affected their career progression.

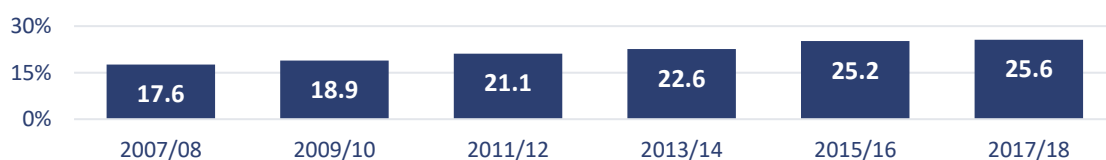
Numerous government scholarship programs highlight the economic benefits that overseas learning can have—on students as individuals and on the nation. Mission statements and

program overviews cite “21st century skill development” and “American competitiveness” as goals, with scholarships funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) designed to be responsive to these stated goals.

The NSF’s overarching strategy to “develop the globally-engaged workforce necessary to ensure the nation’s leadership in advancing science and engineering research and innovation” is apparent in programs such as the **International Research Experiences for Students (IRES)** and **Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW)** programs. These programs respond to the competition from other countries that are now producing large numbers of Ph.D.’s in key STEM fields. Recognizing that “an international research experience is rapidly becoming an integral part of an outstanding graduate education,” the NSF introduced the GROW program in 2013 as an extension of the Graduate Research Fellowship Program⁶ (International Research Experiences for Students, 2019). To provide an opportunity for international collaboration and professional development to Graduate Research Fellows, GROW partners with counterpart agencies in 12 countries. GROW awards approximately 400 recipients annually to Graduate Research Fellows to provide these expanded opportunities for international research collaboration.

The focus on participation of students in STEM fields in overseas learning has increased in the past decade, and opportunities such as the NSF programs described earlier – among other efforts –contribute to growth in STEM student representation in study abroad. The *Open Doors* U.S. Study Abroad Survey data highlighted in Figure 4 demonstrates the significant STEM growth in study abroad, increasing 8 percentage points from 18 percent in the 2007/08 academic year to 26 percent a decade later in 2017/18.

Figure 4: 10 Years of STEM Majors as a Percentage of Study Abroad Population



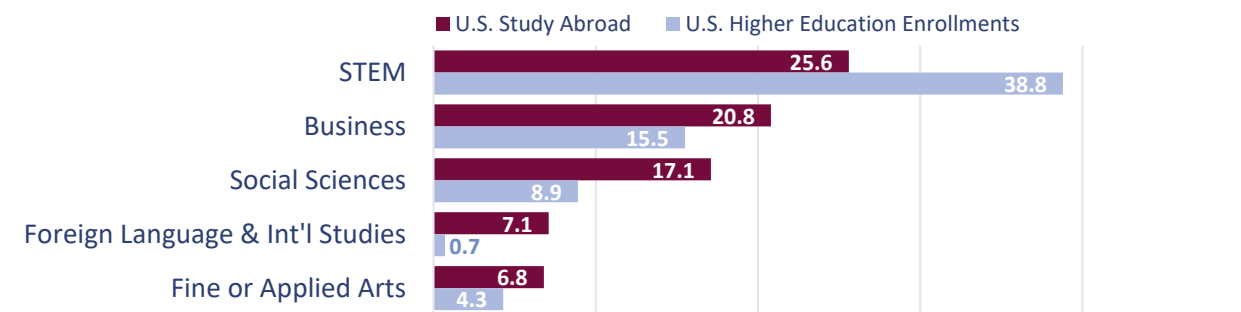
Sources: *Open Doors*, 2019

A look at STEM representation as a share of study abroad participation when compared with other fields of study may, at first glance, lead one to believe there is no need to further increase participation; STEM students make up the largest portion of study abroad participants, at 26

⁶ The Graduate Research Fellowship Program was established in 1952 and is considered the oldest graduate fellowship program in the United States that directly supports graduate students in the STEM fields (NSF, 2019).

percent in the 2017/18 academic year. However, when compared with national enrollments, it is clear these fields remain underrepresented in study abroad, as STEM majors make up 39 percent of higher education enrollments (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Comparison of Field of Study Representation, 2017/18



Source: Open Doors, 2019; U.S. Department of Education, Digest of Education Statistics, 2017

The value of international experiences provided by programs like those sponsored by the NSF are evident. An alumni impact study conducted by IIE to celebrate its Centennial in 2019, *The Power of International Education: Impact analysis of IIE-administered programs, 2005-2015*, showed that STEM program alumni reported they developed technical skills at rates significantly above alumni of other program types. These alumni also developed softer skills including flexibility, confidence, interpersonal, leadership, problem-solving, and work ethic skills at significantly higher rates. These findings reflected previous research conducted by IIE in 2017 regarding study abroad and employability. In this research, students with majors in the STEM fields who studied abroad described it as a valuable opportunity to develop soft skills that are not addressed in their academic programs, and that these soft skills ultimately gave them a hiring advantage over their otherwise similarly qualified peers (Farrugia & Sanger, 2017).

Focus on global workforce skills extends beyond STEM-focused programs. The U.S. Department of Education, Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) program is a language and culture program with a strong workforce focus. Initially called the National Defense Foreign Language Fellowships funded by the National Defense Education Act of 1958, FLAS grants are now funded by the U.S. Department of Education under Title VI of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, and the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008. FLAS grants are awarded to U.S. higher education institutions who then award meritorious funding to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing studies in specified foreign languages and related area or international studies.

Dr. Hilary Kahn, Associate Vice President of International Affairs at Indiana University (IU), has described IU’s dedication to language and culture training and the importance FLAS plays in being able to comprehensively fund these types of programs and opportunities for IU students

(H. Kahn, personal communication, December 13, 2019). As a recognized leader in international education, IU's Russian language program was among the first to receive funding under the 1958 National Defense Education Act, the precursor to the current FLAS program.

Drawing on IU's long experience with FLAS awards, Kahn emphasizes that the U.S. Department of Education is primarily focused on the acquisition of language competencies as they relate to national workforce needs. There is a focus on the applicability of language learning to applicants' career goals, and that is a major focus of the application for FLAS funds. Title VI now requires student learning to be tracked for eight years, and, even prior to the requirement, IU has tried to understand how their FLAS alumni use their language and cultural understanding in their careers. Kahn reports that many of IU's FLAS alumni have entered government work, including the Foreign Service, as well as private multinational organizations and non-governmental organizations, and other areas where their language and culture skills come into play. In this regard, FLAS continues to be successful in its mission to funnel linguistically competent professionals into a variety of fields where these skills are in demand.

...there's a big emphasis [in the FLAS application] on how [the experience is] going to be applied, where it's going to be put into practice, your career goals, your research goals... there is a real interest in getting students into government service or just fulfilling national needs in one way or another, whether it's through fulfilling research or working internationally or teaching or working at a multi-national corporation.

— Dr. Hilary Kahn, Indiana University

Similarly, programs such as **Pickering Fellowships**, **Boren Awards**, and **Project GO** have a strong workforce focus at the core of their program mission. The **CLS Program** website highlights that, "the majority of CLS program alumni in the workforce report that the language skills they gained through the CLS Program had made them a more competitive candidate for their jobs." Findings from IIE's 2019 Centennial impact report revealed that a large majority of alumni who participated in language and culture focused programs found the cross-cultural understanding and intercultural competence they gained applicable to their work following program participation (90 percent reported these skills to be "somewhat" or "very" useful in their post-program work). These experiences and skills also played significant roles in job acquisition, often coming up in interviews (78 percent reported discussing foreign language development in a post-program job interview, and 81 percent reported discussing countries or sites visited) (Sanger, 2019).

Preparing U.S. students with the skills needed to be successful in the global workforce is an integral part of the U.S.'s strategy to create a pipeline of qualified individuals interested in public service who can fill critical needs in the U.S. federal workforce. Among the scholarship

opportunities described throughout the paper, recipients of Pickering Fellowships receive employment in the U.S. Foreign Service, while Boren Award recipients commit to public service and receive support for gaining federal employment after graduation. As a result of this direct connection, the Pickering Fellowship Program has had great success in terms of retention. Dr. López-McGee described Howard University’s long legacy of administering similar programs, such as the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Program and Donald M. Payne International Development Program, noting that a large majority of program alumni have continued their government careers, continuing to shape and redefine the diplomatic workforce of the United States.

Young people interested in applying for the Pickering Fellowship Program generally have an expressed interest in joining the U.S. Department of State’s Foreign Service. As Fellows, the Pickering Program increases their understanding of the U.S. Department of State and prepares them for a Foreign Service career.

— Dr. Lily López-McGee, Howard University

Conclusion

U.S. government scholarships offer students an opportunity to serve the United States while experiencing life in a country outside of the United States. Designed to benefit the United States long-term, the scholarships provided by U.S. government agencies for overseas learning opportunities encourage citizen diplomacy, strengthen national security, and develop a globalized workforce. Although some of these goals may feature more prominently than others depending on the sponsoring agency, they lie at the foundation of U.S. government scholarship programs.

United under the three goals identified in this study, each scholarship program offers a unique experience for students to meet their personal, academic, and career goals. U.S. government scholarship programs vary in structure and form, from traditional for-credit study abroad programs, to workforce-building fellowships, and research-intensive collaborations. As a result, they also develop a wide range of skills for the students participating – from knowledge and understanding of different world regions to proficiency in world languages and, overall, a greater appreciation and understanding for other societies and peoples. No matter the structure or goal, the numerous programs funded by U.S. government agencies exemplify the value of an overseas experience in building desired skills and preparing students for a variety of professional and academic endeavors. Whether one is looking to enhance skills relevant to U.S. national security needs, work toward promoting mutual understanding and citizen diplomacy, or looking for an edge in today’s globalized workforce, there is likely a U.S. government scholarship that fills that need.

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