

EJE TEMÁTICO 1:
ALIANZAS GLOBALES PARA LA INTERNACIONALIZACIÓN
EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EN LA REGIÓN

“Glocal” Partnerships with the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund”

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Introduction

Partners in the Americas (Partners) and 100,000 Strong in the Americas (100,000 Strong Americas), which I gladly represent, enthusiastically share the mission statement put forth this year by the Latin American and the Caribbean Higher Education Conference on Internationalization. I will restate some of its parts here in order to speak to it directly and introduce you to the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund.² In this vein, then, Partners and 100,000 Strong Americas agree that:

1. “la internacionalización...inserta el conocimiento y la dinámica internacional en beneficio de las comunidades locales”;
2. “[l]a integración del conocimiento al servicio de la región tiene como reto incorporar y apropiar la internacionalización”;
3. “acciones de inclusión, cohesión, integración, y colaboración de diversos actores... benefici[an] el desarrollo local ”

We hope that the following presentation on our Innovation Fund underscores the above and the shared belief that 1) the internationalization of higher education is sustainable when rooted in local and global partnerships; 2) the internationalization of higher education empowers local and global communities and partnerships; and 3) the private-public partnership that benefits local and global development is based on equal collaboration. In short, internationalization does not sacrifice or erase the diversity of regionalism or local community, but rather collaborates in a multilateral way with various actors. Alliances between businesses and institutions of higher education, through U.S. with non-U.S. partnerships, strengthen the inherently connected local and global.

1. Sustainability of International Partnerships

The 100,000 Strong Americas Innovation Fund makes “innovation grants” to institutions of higher education to create study abroad opportunities involving students from the United States, as

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² The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund is a collaboration among Partners, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, the U.S. State Department and the White House. <http://www.100KStrongAmericas.org>

well as from Latin America, the Caribbean, and Canada. International exchange is rooted in a partnership between a U.S. and a non-U.S. institution of higher learning. In this context, students study and move to and from the U.S. There is a study abroad deficit in the Western Hemisphere, and our solution is to adopt “the wholesale approach” by working directly with institutions that seek to establish innovative programs for study abroad. Our “wholesale approach” aims to remove traditional institutional barriers that prevent a variety of students and faculty from developing unique partnerships and programs across American borders.

Many scholarship programs already exist. For U.S. students, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program and the Fulbright U.S. Student Program fellowships support study and teaching abroad and are a centerpiece of U.S. educational diplomacy. For foreign students, EducationU.S.A and the Fulbright Foreign Student Program support graduate students and young professionals. Many companies and charities throughout the region also fund scholarship programs. And recently, governments in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador have made substantial investments in study-abroad scholarship programs.

Yet as high quality and important as these scholarship programs are, they reward relatively few, especially in contrast to our goal of a minimum of 200,000 total students each year traveling north and south. 2,300 Gilman scholarships will be awarded this year to U.S. students for study abroad globally, and 8,000 Fulbright awards, about 2,800 of which are targeted to U.S. students and scholars. Even if half of these major scholarship programs went to the Western Hemisphere – which overstates the current distribution weighted toward Europe and Asia – they would only contribute a few thousand students.

Given our limited funding, but organizational advantages, the question became: how can we leverage more resources to support and encourage many more students? We agreed that 100,000 Strong in the Americas’ strategy should focus not on the “retail” approach (individual student scholarships), but on a “wholesale” approach that incentivized institutional change. We could challenge – and offer incentives – to institutions of higher education to form robust and enduring public-private partnerships to address the various structural and systemic barriers as networks of institutions.

We believe that this innovation approach has the power to change the status quo sustainably. Our funds enable institutions to do the hard work involved in identifying new partners in the educational, corporate, and private communities, identifying their own strengths and weaknesses, and developing and testing new ideas with the potential to transform the way they build partnerships in the Western Hemisphere. We thus invite you to participate in this model, which is designed to support the development of local communities and businesses, support the educational growth of underrepresented groups, and facilitate equal global exchange by directly empowering, through the “wholesale approach,” local institutions of higher learning in the Americas. We ultimately wish to create long-term and sustainable change in our study-abroad programs that will not only strengthen the Americas as a region, but also the diverse regions and peoples that make the Americas.

2. Integrating Internationalization to Serve Community

100,000 Strong in the Americas aims to build bridges, establish exchange, and build trust among all of our American nations. Institutions worldwide are focusing on internationalization, wishing to increase student mobility and international research collaboration. However, “academic

collaboration with Latin America ranked [only] as the fourth priority, followed by Africa and then the Middle East,” according to a recent worldwide survey on internationalization conducted by the International Association of Universities.³ We can expect limited funding as a major internal and external obstacle, which has consequently permitted mostly students with financial resources to participate in study abroad in the last decades. Furthermore, dependence only upon government funding is unwise, both because the private sector – the major beneficiary of a better-prepared workforce – is left out, and because government budgets can be volatile. The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund hopes to change this by not only strengthening academic collaboration between the U.S. and the countries of the Western Hemisphere, but also by leveling the playing field for students. Our goal is to help students from diverse and less privileged backgrounds engage in study abroad, increase their future employability, become “global citizens,” and have access to international professional opportunities that would otherwise be very difficult for them.

By building bridges, establishing exchange, and building trust, the Innovation Fund also seeks to sustain regional common ground, create professional talent, and strengthen our people-to-people links in the Western Hemisphere. Freedom in research and education helps maintain democracy, equality, peace, and good governance, and it is our belief—as aptly stated by President Barack Obama in 2013—that “when we study together, we learn together, we work together, and we prosper together.”⁴ Our partners in the private sector understand this, helping us advance the education of our future experts and global professionals to support entrepreneurship and develop skills in high-priority workforce sectors. The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund is a natural partner, building bridges between private donors and higher education institutions that strengthen entrepreneurship and honor community-based strengths in the Western Hemisphere. Our partnerships contribute to the advancement of specific research or fields of study and help prepare our future workforce. In short, the public-private partnership (PPP) aims to support the development of experienced students who will be able to navigate the professional world with global and cultural awareness and expertise. This of course implies being sensitive to local and regional issues that help “inclusion, cohesion, integration, and collaboration” in our hemisphere.

3. Hemispheric Collaboration Built on Public-Private-Partnerships

The public-private partnerships we create support the development of experienced students who will be able to navigate the professional world with global and cultural awareness and expertise. Here we recognize some of our partners and donors by name:

Santander Bank and Santander Universities
 ExxonMobil Foundation
 CAF – Development Bank of Latin America
 Campus Puerto Rico
 Coca-Cola Foundation
 Freeport-McMoran Copper and Gold Foundation
 SENA: Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje, Colombia
 The Ford Foundation⁵

³ Knight, J. (2015). “The Lure of Europe for International Higher Education Cooperation,” *International Higher Education* 48, p. 5.

⁴ President Obama, 3 May 2013, Mexico City, Mexico.

⁵ Announced as of October 1, 2015.

Since 2014 100,000 Strong in the Americas has completed six (6) rounds of innovation funding, with 48 grants awarded to 110 higher education institutions from 16 countries in the Americas. Three additional rounds of grants will be awarded during 2015, including “RETO TEC SENA 2015” with U.S. community colleges.⁶ Grant winners include partnerships with Cuba, Mexico, Jamaica, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Panama, and Costa Rica, among others. In 2016 and 2017 we will be reviewing a minimum of 11 more rounds. Please join our online Innovation Network to receive the latest updates and to interact with other higher education partners by visiting <http://www.100KStrongAmericas.org/educate> Through our grant competition we aim to drive institutional innovation that recent partnerships have accomplished in areas including but not limited to the following:

- Inventive tuition leveraging and swapping
- Faculty-led exchanges building institutional capacity
- Academic and industry blending building global professional competencies
- Underrepresented student program development
- Faculty-led courses and curriculum development
- Summer research and language proficiency
- Overcoming insecurity perceptions
- International mentoring and advising
- Bidirectional corporate internship programs
- Agriculture and biological sciences collaboration
- Multidisciplinary research
- Innovative learning abroad programs, including service learning and internships

To reiterate, we work with institutions that demonstrate promising innovation and the participation of a diverse student body in international education. As grant providers, we consider proposals from a variety of universities, community colleges, technical institutes, and professional programs in order to encompass the greatest diversity of higher education. We frequently help fund shorter terms abroad that are able to accommodate non-traditional students who may have specific time restrictions due to work or family obligations.

4. Students Want Local and Global Engagement

An important starting point toward generating more equity in the internationalization of higher education is changing the campus and changing the culture. Creating institutional capacity, involving faculty, and focusing on mutually beneficial programs of study can begin to overcome the institutional, curricular, and cultural barriers that hinder many possible opportunities to study abroad. The good news is that our students want to participate in local and global engagement, and we can begin to address the institutional needs that aim to support this.

The partnership between Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and the Mexican universities Universidad de Guadalajara and Benemerita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla is an appropriate example for this paper because of the study abroad program they designed around “peer-led reciprocal community service.” The service learning component of this academic partnership is central. Paired students together perform community service in each other’s countries,

⁶ <http://www.100kstrongamericas.org/apply-grant>

in addition to receiving language enhancement and gaining valuable experience as cultural brokers and global citizens. To clarify, “service learning” is not just community service, but the transformation of that activity into a learning and academic experience that builds citizenship and develops local resources. In addition, the “peer education” this model exemplifies aims to facilitate and integrate international and minority students in study abroad. In working with a community group, such as the Sacred Heart Center in Richmond, Virginia, students assist Mexican immigrants with language learning and literacy, as well as childcare and STEM activities for children. Sacred Heart receives funding from the Mexican government, even if based in the U.S., which models for students the transnational nature of local community service.

According to a recent survey, Colombia is number 66 as a country that receives students from the U.S., and number 22 as a country that sends students on study abroad to the U.S.⁷ In light of these low numbers, President Juan Manuel Santos is actively supporting international education in order to maintain peace and build social equity in Colombia. Mobilizing young talent, he understands, is crucial to optimize our quality of life. As of now, 86 higher education institutions in Colombia have joined the 100,000 Strong Americas’ Innovation network (the link for this was mentioned earlier in this presentation), of which 20% are public institutions – a number we hope grows, and we would gladly help you explore possible partnerships to achieve this.⁸ The examples I discuss next, which describe recent partnerships between Colombian and U.S. institutions of higher education, can perhaps inspire future work and academic exchange.

The 100,000 Strong Americas Innovation Fund has supported partnerships between 1) Purdue University and Universidad EAFIT to build institutional capacity for receiving and sending students; 2) New Mexico State University and Universidad de la Salle to support study in agricultural and environmental sustainability; 3) Northern Illinois University and Universidad de la Sabana to develop a faculty-led program in engineering; and 4) Northeastern University and Universidad de los Andes to build institutional capacity for global studies and experiential learning, including peer advising. Note that two of these partnerships involved building “institutional capacity,” which is the first step toward changing the campus and changing the culture of international education. The other two partnerships center on specific themes – agriculture and engineering, respectively – that worked with additional donors – the Banco Santander and ExxonMobil Foundation – to support the professional development of students in those and other fields of study.

Conclusion

We hope to have clearly established in this presentation that the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund is an important tool to connect higher education institutions throughout the Americas and to encourage collaboration toward a goal of increasing student mobility and greater understanding and prosperity. Building long-term relationships to remove the institutional, curricular, and cultural barriers that keep students from studying abroad is the best way to increase those opportunities for students. Our partnerships in higher education will contribute to the prosperity of our region by building new bridges, reestablishing trust, supporting common ground, and creating new talent. We look forward to future collaborations with your institutions.

⁷ Farrugia, C.A., & Bhandari, R. (2014). *Open Doors 2014 Report on Internationalization Educational Exchange*. New York: Institute of International Education. Supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State. <http://www.iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors>

⁸ Partners of the Americas data collection and analysis, observed on October 1, 2015.