

**STATEMENT BY
DR. DAVID PATTON**

**ACTING PRESIDENT, AMERICAN COUNCILS FOR INTERNATIONAL
EDUCATION: ACTR/ACCELS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS,
AND RELATED PROGRAMS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

MARCH 12, 2019

Madam Chairwoman,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee on behalf of the American Councils for International Education. I am requesting that the Subcommittee recommend funding in the fiscal year 2020 State, Foreign Operations bill of at least \$700,900,000 for programs under the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). Further, I ask that funding within ECA for Citizen Exchange Programs be at least at the current level of \$111,860,000. I also ask that funding a level of \$3 million be recommended for Research and Training for Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union Program (Title VIII).

My name is Dr. David Patton, Acting President of American Councils for International Education, one of the leading nonprofit organizations administering U.S. Government and privately funded exchange and educational development programs in Central Europe, the Middle East, and East, Southeast, Central, and South Asia. I am also the President of the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, created in 1978 to develop and sustain long-term, high-quality programs for post-doctoral research on the social, political, economic, environmental, and historical development of Eurasia and Central and Eastern Europe.

In light of the current geopolitical environment and its challenges for the U.S. and our foreign policy objectives, region-to-region and people-to-people connections have acquired even greater importance for the U.S. Strengthening American relationships with the societies of those countries near Russia, China, and Iran through educational and cultural exchanges and strategic language programs is of special significance and value, particularly among the rising generation of political and business leaders, entrepreneurs, academics, and scientists. These people understand the value of being part of the world community, of having a relationship with the United States that will help them grow and prosper.

These programs help the U.S., too. For example, in Uzbekistan, and to a lesser extent Belarus, opportunity has arisen to restart student exchanges that will benefit those countries and ours.

The United States Congress has always played a vital role in defining our national goals for countries and regions of strategic and national security importance to the United States.

This Subcommittee deserves credit for embracing these activities. American Councils is among the administering organizations for the State Department's programming to increase mutual understanding between the U.S. and the world. Research and training, as well as programs promoting critical thinking and media literacy, for Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union is now more critical than ever to our national security interests.

Without a doubt, these programs benefit not just the countries on which they focus; they also benefit the U.S., which must engage, rather than push away, countries with which we have differences.

EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE (ECE)

To be effective, U.S. public diplomacy must reach beyond the English-speaking elites of foreign capitals.

The non-Fulbright side of the State Department exchanges account does precisely this. It provides for some of the most cost-effective and universally admired international education programs in public diplomacy today. The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program for Eastern Europe/Eurasia and the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program for nations with substantial Muslim populations were created by the U.S. Congress and boast today nearly 40,000 active alumni, most under the age of 40. Most recently, we were able to start the FLEX program in several Central European countries, countries where the U.S. needs to have a voice.

FLEX and YES, along with the Year of Exchange in America for Russians (YEAR), and counterpart programs that place similar numbers of U.S. high school and university students overseas to learn critical languages like Arabic, Chinese, and Russian, are preparing a generation of citizens who will be better able to deal with the economic and cultural complexities of the 21st century and who value leadership, entrepreneurship and innovation, and the rule of law.

No instrument of "soft power" is more cost-effective than American outreach to the rising generation of young leaders and professionals through these programs. They provide a significant long-term multiplier effect at relatively little cost as alumni in the home countries rise to increasingly important roles in government, the private sector, and the NGO community.

They deliver professional development support to early career teachers and researchers in the U.S. and overseas, and they provide vitally important immersion language training, internships, and field work support for U.S. students and graduate students in a dozen languages and regions of the world that are deemed critical by the U.S. government.

For that reason, I ask that the Subcommittee include in this legislation language in support of the following exchange programs:

Future Leaders Exchange Program (FLEX)
Youth Exchange and Study (YES)
Year of Exchange in America for Russians (YEAR)

Teachers of Critical Languages Program (TCLP)
Professional Fellows Program (PFP)
Young Southeast Asia Leadership Initiative (YSEALI)
Educational Advising Centers (Education USA)
National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y)
Critical Language Scholarships Program (CLS)

FOREIGN OPERATIONS PROGRAMS

The U.S. currently supports a number of relatively new and unusually important assistance programs in the Eurasia/South East Europe region, which, based on my own experience, deserve particular consideration as models of focused U.S. assistance.

Each contributes to meeting the challenges of preparing a new generation of citizens for the demands of the globalized economy and the concomitant needs for stronger workforce development, professional education, reduction of corruption, and greater social cohesion. They include the support of merit-based testing for university admissions in Ukraine and the support of collaborative research and language training for U.S. and Eurasian scholars under the State Department's highly respected Title VIII Program. Without this support for American scholars, the U.S. risks a future without area specialists who can help us navigate these complicated relationships.

I ask that the Subcommittee provide support for the following programs:

Title VIII (Research and Training in East European/Eurasian Regions)
Ukraine: Transparency in Educational Management; National Testing System

CONCLUSION

Madam Chairwoman, as you proceed with decisions on the fiscal year 2020 bill, I request that you continue to provide strong funding for the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and Foreign Assistance programs, particularly the programs mentioned in this statement.

Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to present my views to the Subcommittee.