

40 YEARS OF

AC Milestones in the Global Context

IMPACT

1976

First group of U.S. graduate students of Russian study in Moscow at the A. S. Pushkin Institute. Since then, more than 4,000 students have studied on the Russian Language and Area Studies Program (RLASP).

1989

AC was selected to lead the Presidential High School Exchange program, placing thousands of U.S. and Russian high school students in local schools in the Soviet Union and the U.S.

1974

Formation of American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) as a consortium of colleges, universities, and schools to advance academic collaboration between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the areas of research, training, and publications.

1986

The American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACCELS) was launched, representing American Councils on-the-ground in other countries, building in-country partnerships, and recruiting students and teachers to study, train, and conduct research in the U.S.

1970s-1980s WORLD CONTEXT: THE COLD WAR

1970s-1980s

For the past 40 years, American Councils' mission has been to have an impact on the world through educational opportunities for individuals, institutions, and communities. When we reflect on our past four decades, we are acutely aware of the sustainability of our mission and how little it has changed. Now working in 69 countries, our mission is more critical today than ever before.

During the Cold War, the non-political tool of education provided a vehicle for discussion and collaboration between countries that were otherwise closed to each other politically. American Councils had its humble beginnings in 1974 when a group of professors of Russian and Slavic Linguistics reached through the Iron Curtain to start an exchange of scholars from MIT, Harvard, and Amherst with their counterparts in the Soviet Union. This provocative

program evolved into four decades of exchanges for undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars.

The 1980s ushered in a warmer decade of international relations that would ultimately end the Cold War. Presidents Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev formed agreements on arms control; the world took a stand on Apartheid; South America fought for people-supported governments; and much more.

As free markets and globalization marked the end of the decade, American Councils saw an opportunity to create some of the first bilateral educational exchange programs to take place between the U.S. and developing countries. The 1990s quickly confronted a realignment and



1993

AC was selected to administer the largest high school exchange program at that time: the Future Leaders of Exchange (FLEX) program. After more than 20 years of operations, FLEX has supported more than 23,000 students from all over Eurasia to attend high school in the U.S. and live with an American host family for an academic year.

1999

AC was invited to implement a new program called Open World to promote professional exchanges between the U.S. and Eurasia

1992

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, American Councils played a major role in the launch and implementation of the FREEDOM Support Act High School Exchange, as well as the Muskie Program and the FSA Undergraduate Exchange.

1995

AC introduced a research series on language learning in an immersion environment in cooperation with the National Foreign Language Center.

1990s WORLD CONTEXT: GLOBAL REALIGNMENT

1990s

reconsolidation of economic and political power across the world. New countries were formed, resulting from events like the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and economic strength surpassed nuclear arsenal as a predictor of global success.

In response to the changing world, the United States Congress passed the FREEDOM Support Act of 1992 to provide assistance to the 12 newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, resulting in a new wave of educational program activity between the East and West.

The thawing of the Cold War, the NAFTA treaty, the mass mobilization of capital markets, and the beginning of the widespread proliferation of new communication tools

such as the Internet led to an extended period of economic prosperity for the U.S. during the 1990s.

While other parts of the world were in an economic crisis, the U.S. became a new destination for students, training teachers, and young professionals looking to improve their economic situation at home.

To that end, American Councils expanded its program participant base to include young professionals and focused on new research on language learning and acquisition in an overseas immersion environment.



2004

AC was selected to operate the study abroad component of the Flagship language program, a new model in language immersion designed to graduate Americans students with a professional level of language proficiency in Arabic, Chinese, Hindi-Urdu, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, and Turkish.



2008

AC was selected to administer The National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y), a program for American high school students to study less commonly taught languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Persian, Hindi, Korean, and Turkish in an overseas immersion setting.



2010

AC was selected to administer the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program for American undergraduate and graduate students to study seven languages (Azerbaijani, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Turkish) in an immersion setting.

2003

AC began to administer the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, which brings high school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to live in the U.S. and attend high school for an academic year. The YES program currently brings approximately 900 students to the U.S. each year from nearly 30 countries.

AC partnered with the government of Kyrgyzstan to produce the first merit-based national testing system in the country, fundamentally changing the process of university admissions and the distribution of government scholarships. In subsequent years, AC won support to undertake similar testing initiatives in Georgia (2005), Russia (2006), and Ukraine (2009).

2000s WORLD CONTEXT: GLOBALIZATION

2000s

President Bill Clinton cut the ribbon on the 21st century by calling for an international education policy and issuing an executive memorandum in 2000 that promoted study exchanges, partnerships between U.S. and international institutions of higher education, and the advancement of technology to spread knowledge globally.

The importance of this decision was made clear by the tragic events of September 11th, 2001, which underscored the threat of terrorism not only for the U.S., but also for countries around the world. The national security risk posed by an inability to understand and communicate with other parts of the world in which the U.S. had not been heavily invested began to drive the agenda around education.

In this decade, the influx of students, scholars, and professionals to the United States in the 1990s was quickly mirrored by the development of overseas language immersion programs for American students to acquire advanced proficiency in world languages deemed critical for national security.

American Councils used its research to start designing innovative models for teaching advanced language proficiency in overseas immersion settings and to demonstrate their impact.



2014

AC celebrated its 40th year anniversary by launching its Anniversary Scholarship Fund to provide under-served American students the opportunity to study overseas.

AC was selected as an advisor to the newly launched U.S.-Poland Innovation Program and Council (PLUS-IP), which promotes bilateral cooperation on research and development innovation.

The AC Research Center (ARC) was launched to address central issues in U.S. language policy with a global perspective. ARC collaborated with a private foundation to produce a research report on improving the education system in Indonesia, referencing lessons learned from other countries.

2012

American Councils coordinated the second phase of the Cooperative Agreement for the Ukrainian Standardized External Testing Initiative (USETTI) program, aimed at increasing transparency in Ukraine's educational system.

The U.S.-Russia Innovation Corridor (USRIC) program, created by the U.S.-Russia Bilateral Presidential Committee, was formed to provide assistance to startup companies, innovative projects, and universities wishing to explore U.S.-Russia collaborations around commercializing innovations.

2013

American Councils President, Dr. Dan E. Davidson, testified before Congress on the vital need for continued funding for international exchange and training programs.

2010s WORLD CONTEXT: IMMEDIACY AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS

2010s

The second decade of the 21st century commenced under the worst world economic crisis in recent history. Economic concerns and austerity substantially reduced government funding for research and education.

Now at the halfway mark, this decade is characterized by a shared concern for global issues that must be addressed by international collaboration and a unified response.

There is little speculation left around the connectedness of our world, making cross-border communication more critical than ever. The ability to leverage technology to share information with international partners is expediting progress on a global level.

With shrinking government resources across the globe, academia and private industry are being tapped to support educational initiatives and are partnering to produce innovation and research that will help resolve world challenges.

American Councils is playing a significant role in connecting U.S. and international universities to collaborate on research privatization and technology transfer. AC is also sharing decades of best practices to assist governments with national education reform.