

AMERICAN  
COUNCILS  
FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

2024 IMPACT  
REPORT



# 2024 IMPACT REPORT

# Global Challenges and the Opportunity to Serve the Greater Good



## *Dear Friends & Colleagues,*

I write to you in my first year as American Councils for International Education's president and CEO. For nearly four decades, most recently as the organization's executive vice president, it has been an honor to serve alongside my dedicated coworkers and be entrusted with the stewardship of our shared mission.

I want to express my appreciation to the American Councils Board of Trustees for their confidence in my abilities to oversee an organization whose mission I believe in deeply. I am also grateful to my predecessors Dr. Dan Davidson and Dr. David Patton for their tireless dedication and visionary leadership. Under their guidance, American Councils has grown from a small nonprofit dedicated to language programming between the United States and the Soviet Union, to administering over 250 programs annually in 148 countries.

As I embark on this journey, I am reminded of the incredible impact American Councils has had on the lives of our over 100,000 alumni and their communities. From the Russian Language and Area Studies Program (RLASP), of which I am proud to be an alumna, to the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) and

Youth Exchange and Study Program (YES), the flagship secondary programs that recently celebrated their 30th and 20th anniversaries respectively, to the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) and the Young Transatlantic Innovation Leaders Initiative (YTILI), our latest collaborations with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State—so many of our participants have returned to their countries to make trailblazing contributions as community leaders, business executives, educators, innovators, humanitarians, diplomats, and government officials.

I also know that American Councils can do more. Current global complexities like Russia's full-scale and unjustified invasion of Ukraine are fraught and disturbing, but I believe that through administering programs that grow leadership, strengthen countries and institutions, and develop capacity, we can address the greatest challenges of our time. These programs create transformative change by expanding our vision of what the world can be and developing mutual understanding across languages, cultures, and borders.

Witnessing the remarkable way American Councils brings people and countries together has inspired my professional life. My optimism for the journey ahead is only surpassed by my confidence in American Councils' 650 employees worldwide whose shared enthusiasm for our mission is the bedrock of the organization. As American Councils observes its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, we look forward to celebrating with you, honoring the history of the organization through events and activities, and working toward a brighter future.

Looking at the recent past and into the future, I am excited about American Councils' unique contributions to solving the world's challenges. Together with our participants, alumni, and supporters, we will keep working to support global engagement that promotes prosperity, cooperation, and resilience.



*Lisa Choate*  
President & CEO



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# 2022-2023 Impact by the Numbers



## PARTICIPANTS

In 2022-2023, more than **8,500** individuals participated in in-person academic and cultural exchanges, with programming for more than **140,000** students from over **130** countries and another **253,000+** participating virtually.

**92%** of participants surveyed were extremely satisfied with American Councils' administered programs.

The English Speaking Nation (ESN: STT) Secondary Teacher Training program trained more than **18,000** English teachers in Uzbekistan; more than **450** of the teachers trained were certified by TESOL, and those receiving ESN TESOL certificates, received a 50% salary increase from the Ministry of Education.

The Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF) Fellowship has maintained a **100%** graduation rate, with more than **115** graduates over 19 years, with over **\$6.5 million** in donations and cost share raised.

**2022-2023** secondary school exchange students gave more than **4,260** International Education Week presentations, reaching an audience of **94,600** Americans.



## NEW PROGRAMMING

In January 2022, USAID partnered with the Ministry of Public Education of Uzbekistan (MOPE) to launch a five-year, **\$10 million** Youth Entrepreneurship activity. Addressing both school-based and after-school programs for grades 8 to 11, the initiative aims to ensure employability and a successful school-to-work transition.

In 2021 American Councils was honored to join the ranks of the International Visitor Leadership Program's (IVLP) National Program Agency network, supporting over **464** participants from **135** countries.

American Councils administered the "America's Languages Online Guide to Language Access," a multi-year grant to offer language education in the U.S. The initiative focused on **all of America's languages**, especially those of Native American and immigrant communities, as well as less commonly taught languages from regions of the world critical to U.S. national security and economic interests. This initiative was funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

American Councils conducted emergency fundraising campaigns in response to the fall of the government of the Republic of Afghanistan and Russia's war against Ukraine. The Afghanistan Emergency fund raised over **\$110,000** to help our Afghan staff, their families, and our program alumni mitigate the challenges posed by the Taliban takeover. The Emergency Support for Ukraine Initiative raised **\$70,000** to support humanitarian causes throughout the country, including direct funding for students, refugees, and internally displaced people.



# Academic Study

UNDERGRADUATES  
GRADUATE STUDENTS  
FACULTY  
PROFESSIONALS  
NON-DEGREE STUDENTS  
INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS

American Councils connects scholars with opportunities—throughout the U.S. and around the world—to learn and research key academic topics and to develop professional, leadership, intercultural, and advanced language skills.

Students and scholars emerge from American Councils' implemented academic opportunities with deep, substantive, region-specific knowledge in their fields of study.

The impact of their newly-acquired skills and expertise benefits their individual careers; their local communities; and their home countries' economic, social, and political development.

### Academic and research programs include:

- ◆ Title VIII-funded independent, policy-relevant research and language training abroad (*U.S. Department of State*) in 22 countries throughout Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia
- ◆ Tradition and Modernity in Taiwan
- ◆ Masters and Internship Program (MIP) Graduate Fellowships for Albania
- ◆ Russia Language and Areas Studies Program (RLASP)
- ◆ U.S.-Central Asia Education Foundation Enterprise Fellowship Program (U.S.-CAEF)
- ◆ Kosovo American Education Fund (KAEF)
- ◆ United States Timor-Leste Scholarship Program (*U.S. Department of State*)
- ◆ Overseas Flagship Language Initiative programs in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, India, Indonesia, Senegal, and Tanzania (*U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Language and National Security Education Office*)



American Councils has recruited, selected, and placed more than **2,500** undergraduate and graduate students at U.S. universities since 2012...  
  
...and has negotiated over \$7.5 million in tuition reductions, enabling hundreds of graduate and undergraduate students to take part in transformative educational experiences.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# The Kosovo American Education Fund

KAEF offers graduate fellowships at U.S. universities to Kosovars committed to their country's economic development. Fellows receive a degree after completing one to two years of master's-level study and a professional internship.

As of 2022, more than half of KAEF program alumni were active in the private sector, where they created 50+ businesses, generated hundreds of jobs, and managed projects valued at more than 80 million Euros. In companies such as Black Bird Marketing, Cactus, Deloitte, Management and Development Associates (MDA), Novus, Recura, Solaborate, Sonnecto, KFC Kosova—to name but a few. KAEF alumni have heightened Kosovo's appeal as a marketplace for local and international investors.

KAEF alumni have also bolstered Kosovo's government and democratization, holding senior positions within the Office of the President, the Office of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Agriculture.

## Kosovo Alumni Celebration

In 2022, KAEF hosted a celebration to honor the program's alumni and their contributions to Kosovo's economic development. Keynoted by Prime Minister of Kosovo Mr. Albin Kurti and USAID Kosovo Mission Director Ms. Zeinah Salahi, the event was punctuated by an announcement and signing ceremony in which KAEF alumni pledged to lend their expertise, pro bono, to Kosovo's government and its institutions.



Since 2004, more than 115 KAEF Fellows have achieved GPAs exceeding 3.60 at 40+ universities including:

American Councils has negotiated more than 70% tuition reductions for KAEF, generating more than \$5 million in support for the program.

American UNIVERSITY {6}

Bentley UNIVERSITY {6}

Brandeis UNIVERSITY {6}

Cornell UNIVERSITY {1}

Duke UNIVERSITY {10}

Georgetown UNIVERSITY {2}

Harvard UNIVERSITY {2}

Johns Hopkins UNIVERSITY {2}

Middlebury COLLEGE {9}

Tufts UNIVERSITY {1}

UNIVERSITY OF North Carolina AT CHAPEL HILL {2}

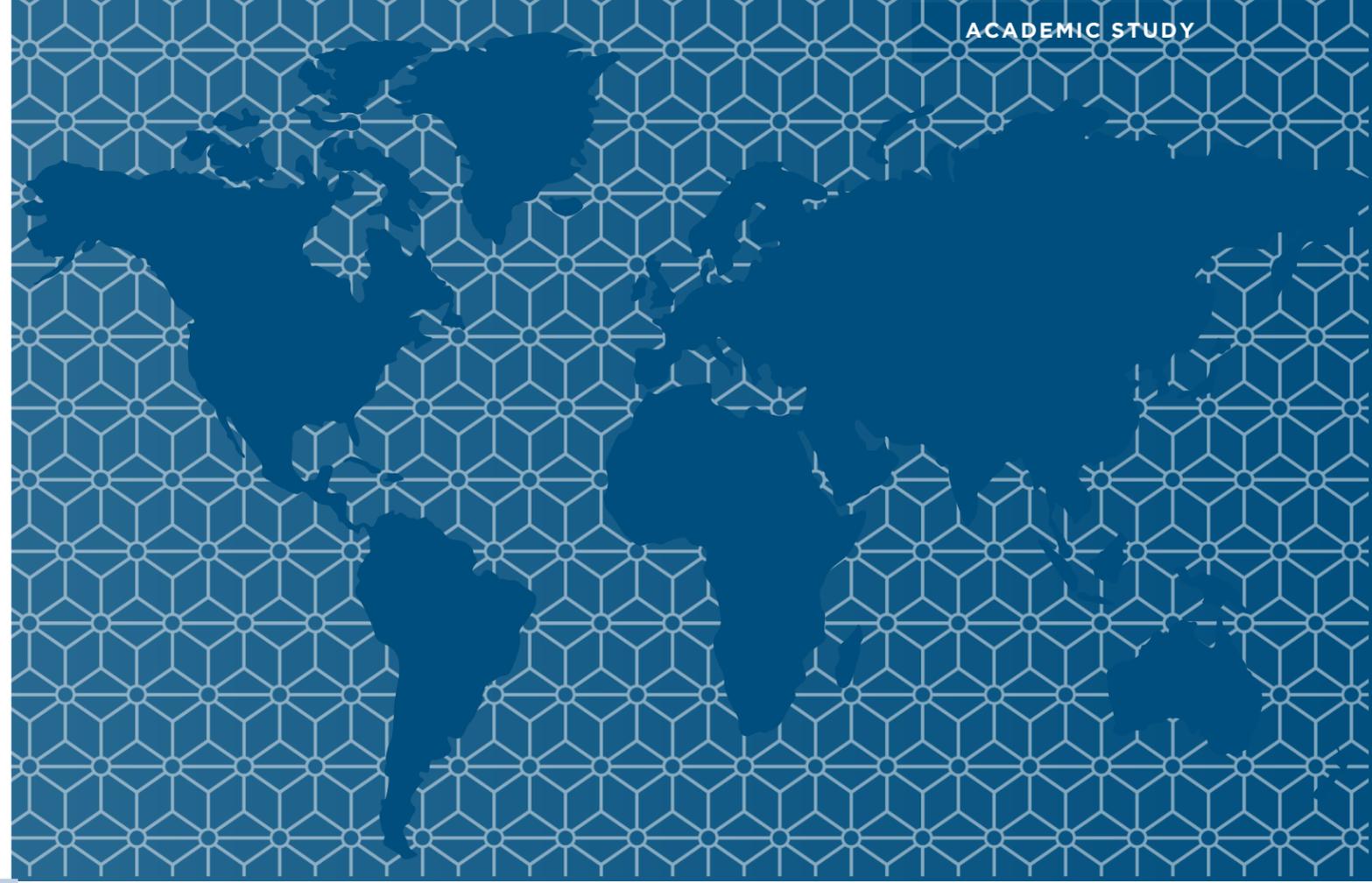
Yale UNIVERSITY {1}

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# United States Timor-Leste Scholarship Program (USTL)

USTL participants develop the skills and professional experience needed to address the socio-economic challenges facing their homeland of Timor-Leste; gain a unique understanding of U.S. civil society and democratic values; and enrich their U.S. host communities by sharing valuable insights into the history, culture, and collective experience of their dynamic nation.

Since 2014, American Councils has placed 22 USTL program students at 14 U.S. universities and community colleges to pursue their undergraduate degrees.



“ USTL program students contribute greatly to...our campus and in the Fox Valley (Wis.) community. The students share information about their country, culture and establish friendships with students and community members.

– Dr. Susan A. May, President and CEO,  
Fox Valley Technical College, Appleton, Wis.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# U.S.-Central Asia Foundation's Enterprise Student Fellowship Program (U.S.-CAEF)

## Strengthening Central Asia's Private Sector

The U.S.-CAEF program gives undergraduate students in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan need-based scholarships to study business at universities in the region, and funds regional internships at international and local companies in Central Asia for Fellows entering their junior year.

- ◆ **74** fellowships awarded during the 2022-23 academic year.
- ◆ **3.57** average GPA, with **43%** of Fellows earning recognition on the President's List at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA), and **58%** at KIMEP University.
- ◆ **154** U.S.-CAEF Fellows have interned at **76** companies since 2009.
- ◆ Regional Summer Internships hosted in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan at organizations including the Aga Khan Foundation, Andromeda, Arvand Bank, Coca Cola, DaVinci Management Consulting, and Freedom Finance.
- ◆ **73%** of U.S.-CAEF interns received internship extensions and/or job offers.
- ◆ **10** Fellows interned in the U.S. on the Enterprise Intern Fellowship's International Capstone Internship Program.



## Regional U.S.-CAEF Alumni Conference (RAC) 2023

In late April 2023, more than 85 U.S.-CAEF alumni from five Central Asian countries gathered in Almaty, Kazakhstan for the second Regional Alumni Conference (RAC'23). For two days these talented alumni collaborated and discussed alumni development, career interests, networking, and U.S. commitment to Central Asia's growth. The conference showcased industry-leading keynote presentations, current business insights, workshops, and entertainment. The U.S.-CAEF Alumni Association inspired the audience with innovative presentations.

*This event was sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and U.S.-CAEF and administered by American Councils.*



## SUPPORTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURS



During his high school years in Batken, Kyrgyzstan, U.S.-CAEF Fellow and AUCA graduate Nurmukhamad Turkbaev regularly crossed the border into Tajikistan to attend English classes. The first student from his region to receive a full scholarship to study at AUCA, Nurmukhamad felt a responsibility to set an example and motivate other students to challenge themselves. Nurmukhamad won first prize and \$100,000 in Business Okul Ata (the Kyrgyz version of Shark Tank) for his fruit and nut export company.



Community service and volunteerism are fundamental to the programs implemented by American Councils.

Participants who give back develop key competencies that help them grow into confident, resourceful leaders who leverage their experience, amplify their impact, and inspire progress.

# Community Outreach and Volunteerism

CREATING  
DYNAMIC,  
ENGAGED, AND  
RESOURCEFUL  
CITIZENS

American Councils provides safe, well-supported environments to learn and practice newfound skills, creating opportunities to:

- ◆ build personal, civic, and professional skills through project-based activities in home and host communities;
- ◆ develop enduring ties with host country communities, as well as with U.S. institutions and organizations;
- ◆ cultivate leadership skills; and
- ◆ increase understanding of home and host country culture, values, and the role of civic engagement.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Professional Fellows Program (PFP)

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and administered by American Councils, the Professional Fellows Program (PFP) for Europe and Eurasia is a two-way, global exchange that promotes mutual understanding, enhances leadership and professional skills, and builds stalwart partnerships between emerging leaders from foreign countries and the U.S. PFP participants are placed in intensive five- to six-week fellowships in non-profit organizations, private sector businesses, and government offices across the United States for an individually-tailored professional development experience.



Olena Pavlyuk from Lviv, Ukraine, director of Lviv Open Lab, a youth center supporting students interested in STEM fields and popularizing science education among adolescents. While on the program, Olena completed a fellowship with the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago where she learned about organizational structure, marketing, and developing a business that supports her community.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program and Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the FLEX program provides year-long study abroad opportunities to promote mutual understanding between citizens of the United States and 21 countries across Europe and Eurasia.

FLEX served as the model for the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program, which creates exchange opportunities for high school students from countries around the world and the YES Abroad Program, which sends high-achieving American students to select YES countries.



# FLEX-Inspired Volunteerism in U.S. Communities, 2022-2023



28,988 total hours of community service invested in U.S. host communities



Between April and October 2022 alone, FLEX alumni engaged 3,361 fellow alumni and 19,191 non-alumni in 597 community service and educational activities

FLEX and YES students made more than 4,260 International Education Week (IEW) presentations in the 2022-2023 academic year, introducing themselves and their home countries and cultures to over 94,600 Americans.

(LEARN MORE ABOUT FLEX AND YES UNDER **CULTURAL EXCHANGE** ON PAGE 19.)



FLEX alumna Anna Bondarenko, founder and CEO of the Ukrainian Volunteer Service (UVS), was featured in *The Atlantic* for leading efforts to connect volunteers with more than 900 organizations working on food distribution, assistance for houseless people, cleaning up rubble after bombing raids, and other activities across Ukraine. Anna's team at UVS was given a 2022 Democracy Award by the National Endowment for Democracy.

Eugeniu Sinchevici, a FLEX alumnus from Chisinau, Moldova, is one of the youngest members of Moldova's parliament. Just 23 years old, Eugeniu represents the Youth of Truth and Solidarity Party, working to bring change for young people at all levels of power.

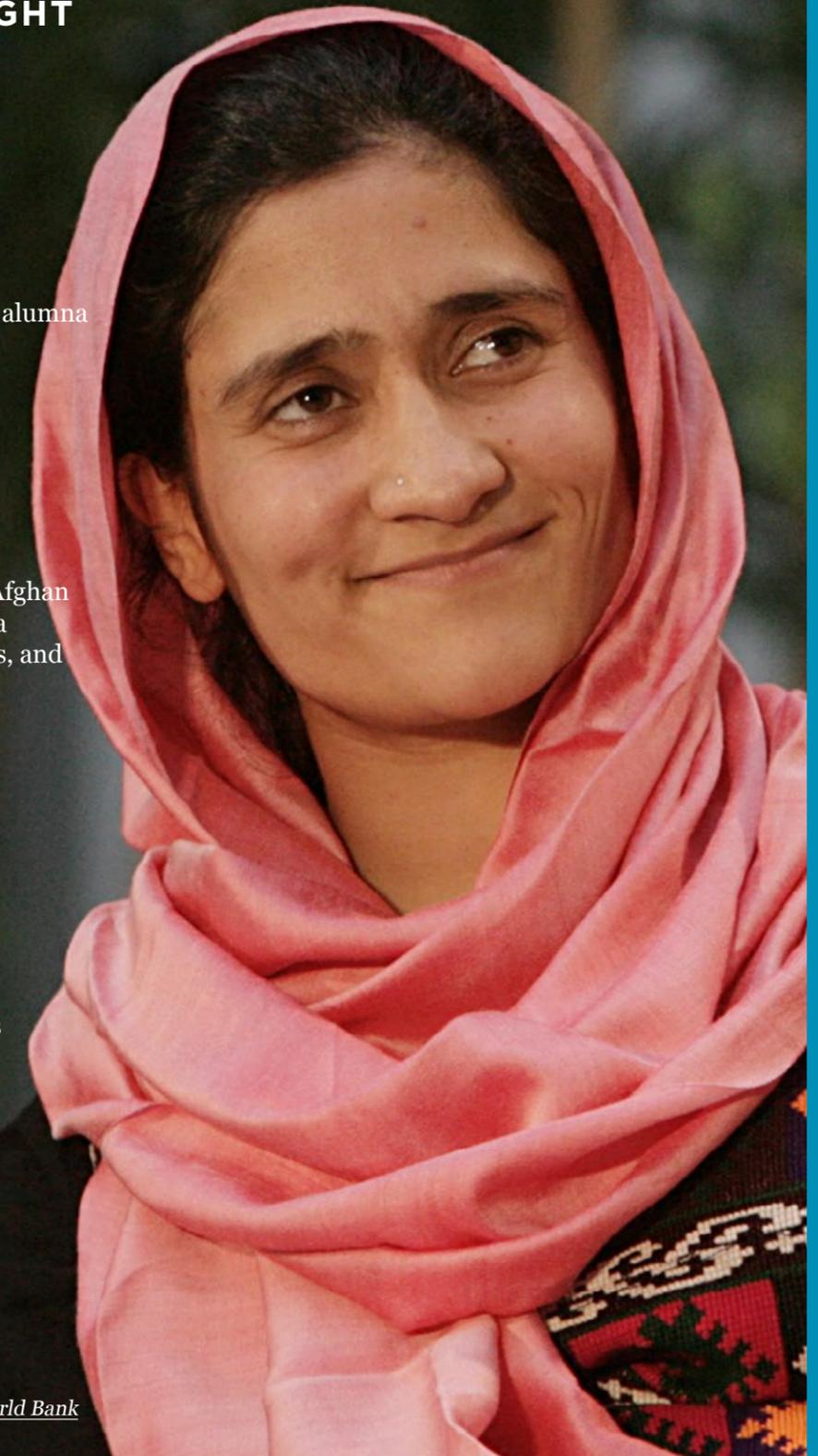
*"We, as young people, have the courage to say things others wouldn't say sometimes. We have a lot of energy and willingness to learn and make mistakes, with an ultimate vision for Moldova. We have our whole lives to live here, so it's in our interest to make the country the way we want to live in it."*



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Shabana Basij-Rasikh, a YES alumna and lifelong advocate for women's education in Afghanistan, has been a hero for Afghan girls as the founder of the School of Leadership Afghanistan (SOLA), the first all-girls boarding school in the country. With the fall of the Afghan government in 2021, Shabana helped 250 students, teachers, and their families flee the country and find safety in Rwanda, where she continues to educate young girls.

In a July 2023 "60 Minutes" interview, Shabana reflected on her time studying in the U.S. with YES as a teenager, the power of education, and her journey with the students of SOLA to safely continue their mission in Rwanda.



*photo by Simone D. McCourtie / World Bank*



Cultural exchange and mutual understanding are fundamental to American Councils' mission and integral to its programming.

As students cultivate relationships with peers and host families from other countries, a deep respect for different cultures and values grows organically—alongside an understanding of civic rights and responsibilities, institutional and grassroots leadership, entrepreneurial skills, and a passion for giving back to one's community.

American Councils' emphasis on cultural immersion guides participants to:

- ◆ appropriately navigate business and social cultures;
- ◆ promote community service in their home countries;
- ◆ foster sustainable relationships that enrich their home and host communities; and
- ◆ develop into mature, confident, culturally adept citizens.

# Cultural Exchange

CONNECTION FOR A MORE PROSPEROUS AND PEACEFUL WORLD

“ International exchange... is also about people building strong relationships... Being part of exchange world is great because you experience and enhance so many skills at the same time, you become more appreciative... It is all about making the world a better place. It is all about giving back to the world we live in!

—FLEX alumnus

”

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program

Every year, FLEX students are hosted in **50 states** by over **900 families** at more than **750 U.S. schools**.

*Source: Host Families and Schools | FLEX (discoverflex.org)*

The FLEX program introduces European and Eurasian youth (ages 15 to 18 1/2) to leadership opportunities in U.S. communities nationwide. As students, these teens dive deep into community service projects that teach both the “how” and “why” of civic responsibility; as alumni, they share new skills and lessons that can benefit friends, family, and community back home.

FLEX also enriches U.S. communities, as hosts create lasting relationships with visiting students and absorb an understanding of their cultures. The true value of the FLEX program happens through mutual respect, insight, perspective, and connection.

IN ITS FIRST 30 YEARS, FLEX HAS PROVIDED SCHOLARSHIPS TO MORE THAN 27,000 SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM:

- |                |            |              |
|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Armenia        | Kazakhstan | Romania      |
| Azerbaijan     | Kyrgyzstan | Russia       |
| Belarus        | Latvia     | Serbia       |
| Czech Republic | Lithuania  | Slovakia     |
| Estonia        | Moldova    | Tajikistan   |
| Georgia        | Mongolia   | Turkmenistan |
| Greece         | Montenegro | Ukraine      |
| Hungary        | Poland     | Uzbekistan   |



“ Culture helps us relate to each other. Learning about other cultures helps us look at things from different perspectives... I believe that every single day is an exchange students’ day! Every day we are sharing our identities and telling our stories. You can’t even imagine how excited I was to represent my country! ”

“ Being a [FLEX] alumnus helped set me on the right path toward the person I want to become. Cultural adjustments were challenging, since FLEX draws from a variety of countries with conflicts, misunderstandings, and differing beliefs, but joint workshops and activities helped overcome some of those obstacles. ”

PROGRAM  
HIGHLIGHT

# Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program

Immersion in the daily life of a new country imbues young YES and YES Abroad students with new language skills and cultural reference points, as well as a fresh perspective on their own countries and values. Throughout an academic year, these bright, ambitious teens—from the U.S. and 37 countries of strategic importance around the globe—engage in opportunities to practice skills that inspire them; lead in ways that empower them; and broaden their networks by forging lasting connections that span the globe.

“

*I was aware that I would be a part of an American family upon arriving here, but I did not realize I would come to care for them to this extent. From picking out homecoming dance dresses with my host mother, to practicing for the theater play with my host dad, little (and big) moments like these have made me feel incredibly loved. My host parents have made me realize the wonderful reality of having a second loving family halfway across the world from my home country, and for that I couldn't be more grateful.*

”

– YES 2022-2023 Participant

“

*The best part of my virtual YES Abroad experience was being able to form relationships and make connections.... While we did have some similarities, (learning about new cultures, interest in studying abroad, etc.) there was a lot to be learned from each individual I met, whether it was people from my host country, or other YES Abroad finalists.*

”

– YES Abroad Participant, 2020-2021 Bulgaria

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Markal Kelly overcame a variety of challenges during his YES Abroad program in Bulgaria in 2018-19. Of his experience coaching peers in English speech and debate, he says:

*"This opportunity allowed me to give the students a first-hand experience with a native speaker, while also changing their perception... I even had the privilege to meet the students' parents."*

Markal is earning a degree in international studies from Morehouse College. He has studied abroad in Panama on a Gilman scholarship and served as a Study Abroad Ambassador with a stated goal to “assist other African-American men in their pursuit of an international education.”



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Leadership and English Advancement Program (LEAP)

Three-week LEAP camps teach English language and personal development skills to a cohort of 300 Afghan youth (50 per camp), ages 15 to 17. American Councils also trains and mentors 60 Afghan counselors (10 per camp) to hone their teaching and leadership skills. Themes vary from program to program, but leadership, conflict transformation, and business are focal points of the specially-designed curricula.

Camp curriculum components:

English skills taught by experienced American teachers

Workshops emphasizing civic and individual responsibility and youth solidarity

Extracurricular activities that put the program's classroom learning into practice

American Councils established a three-week Leadership Program (LEAP) for displaced Afghan youths living in Albania. The U.S. Department of State funded this unique opportunity for young Afghan refugees to develop their leadership potential. The program kicked off with 31 students attending the opening day, and wrapped up with an Afghan-Albanian Cultural Exchange Day, where students from both countries dressed in their traditional outfits, learned songs in both languages, and played a trivia game about Afghanistan and Albania. YES Albania alumni joined in with a presentation to inspire LEAP campers to stay active in their communities.



American Councils' administered camp and workshop programs have educated and inspired more than 3,500 secondary school students from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan, and Tajikistan.

<p><b>250 Afghan students</b> Leadership and English Advancement Program (LEAP)</p>	<p><b>191 FLEX &amp; YES participants</b> Workshops for Youth Leaders in English Teaching</p>
<p><b>140 English Access Microscholarship Students</b> All-India Access Summer Camp</p>	<p><b>400+ Afghan and 150 Ethiopian participants</b> Youth Solidarity and English Language</p>
<p><b>40 English Access Microscholarship teachers</b> The Workshop for Access-India Teachers</p>	<p><b>685 participants</b> Civic Education Programs</p>
<p><b>4,600 Tajikistani and Kyrgyzstani participants</b> Summer Camp America Camp</p>	<p><b>20 Moldovan participants</b> Operation P.E.A.C.E Coding and Gamification Workshop</p>
<p><b>350 participants from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Pakistan, and Tajikistan</b> Future Stars Program</p>	<p><b>40 young Slovak students</b> Camp Courage 2020 in Slovakia *Postponed to 2021*</p>

**AMERICAN COUNCILS CAMP PHILOSOPHY:**  
To inspire tomorrow's leaders in a student-centered environment that promotes personal developmental, teamwork, and individual responsibility.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Civic Education Workshop

Each year, some 685 secondary school students from Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX), Youth Exchange and Study (YES), and Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange (CBYX) programs gather in Washington, D.C. to learn about the American political system and the principles and values inherent in American society. These Civic Education Workshops (CEW) focus on volunteerism, community involvement, the role of the media in a democratic society, the presidential election process, federalism, free speech and debate, democratic institutions, and the U.S. foreign policy decision-making process.

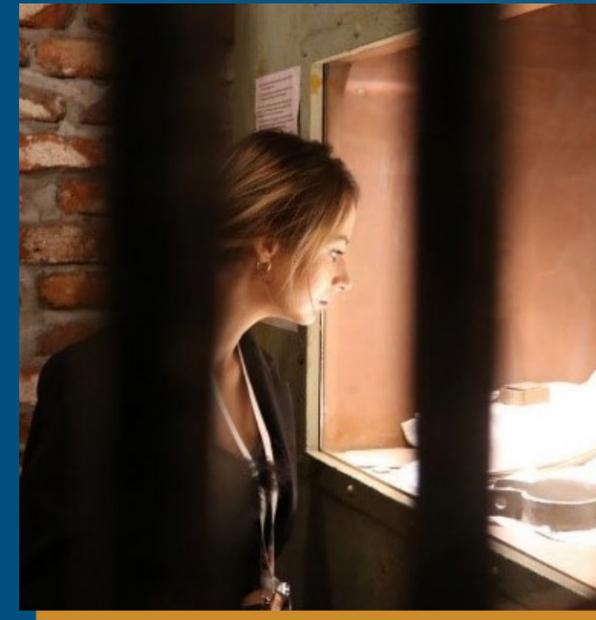
“CEW was held in Washington D.C., the beating heart of the United States. I could have never anticipated the strong bonds that I built with my peers from all over the world. For me, the real magic of CEW was being surrounded by other YES students who are just as driven as I am to make the world a better place. I remember observing these peers during the workshops and how determined they were to make their voices heard and their ideas noticed. I can't recall one time when my new friends didn't ask questions after the guest speakers' presentations concluded. As soon as the guest speaker asked for questions, hands always shot up around the room.”

– Maram Amani, YES 2021-2022, Tunisia, placed by Aspect in Denver, Colo.



## Elie Wiesel Study Tour

On the Elie Wiesel Study Tour 2022, Romanian university students visited historic Jewish cultural sites across Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, and Poland, including guided tours of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II-Birkenau, to learn about human rights and the history of the Holocaust. The Study Tour bridges communities and countries, allowing tomorrow's leaders to stand on the sites of some of history's greatest horrors, inspiring them to build a future without hate, fear, and genocide.



“This experience made me aware of the responsibility that we young people have for the future... and that by exploring and learning from the mistakes of the past you can create a better future. I learned that by changing the perspective on the past you can change the perspective on the future and that each of us can bring added value to society. I learned that empathy is a key element in creating a society with healthy principles. The fact that we had the opportunity to explore the past with specialized teachers made us understand the historical context, know where we place ourselves on the axis of time and let us be free to experience what each place conveyed to us.”

– Bianca Cășeriu

The Elie Wiesel Study Tour is sponsored by the U.S. Embassy Bucharest, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Romania, and the Ambasada Israelului in România and coordinated by American Councils Romania with support from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Romania and the Elie Wiesel National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust.

## 4/4 for Friends Volunteer Celebration in Romania

Following the model of the United States' annual April Volunteer Month, 4/4 for Friends dedicates 10 days in April to recognizing the work of volunteers benefitting their communities and fellow humans. The program welcomes everyone to join this volunteering initiative celebrating the values of community service and friendship throughout Romania. What started as a small project, produced by American Councils' office in Romania, has grown into a national movement, with over 30,000 volunteers and many local partners garnering tens of thousands of volunteering hours in 2023.





American Councils has collaborated with overseas ministries, government agencies, and academic institutions to develop national standardized assessments, large-scale faculty trainings, and academic integrity systems—while ensuring public awareness by engaging with educators at the local level.

Committed to strengthening global education at every level, American Councils equips educational leaders around the world with tools to build capacity in their institutions.

### The benefits of American Councils' educational and institutional development:

- ◆ **Putting Students First:** Learner-centered language instruction and culturally-relevant curricula for foreign language students.
- ◆ **Building on Success:** Any changes to policy, practice, resource allocation, curriculum, and assessment are based on data—prior success—that points to measurably-improved educational outcomes.
- ◆ **Training for Today:** Timely, technical, and mission-appropriate training that adheres to professional standards.

# Educational and Institutional Development

BY LEVERAGING GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES AND EXPERTISE, AMERICAN COUNCILS SUPPORTS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS AND INSTITUTIONS TO BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE AND GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## University Partnership Lab

American Councils' University Partnership Lab has trained and guided more than 160 administrators at 89 institutions of higher education in 10 countries to build partnerships around the world.

American Councils' University Partnership Lab sparks, aligns, and drives strategic international partnerships among university administrators, faculty, students, and other stakeholders in higher education. Through a series of virtual and in-person training sessions and ongoing guidance, the Lab distributes best-practices toolkits to promote the globalization of higher education. American Councils staff offer targeted training to help foreign university administrators and faculty successfully engage with U.S. partners.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# English Speaking Nation Secondary Teacher Training Program (ESN:STT)

ESN:STT was launched by the U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan, in partnership with the Ministry of Preschool and School Education of Uzbekistan and American Councils, to strengthen English language teachers' classroom competency and skills across the country. ESN:STT includes trainers' training, professional development for English teachers, a mentoring program to build peer support among educators, and a branding campaign to raise the profile of the teaching profession by highlighting the role English will play in Uzbekistan's economic future. In just three years, ESN:STT directly trained 18,000 secondary school teachers and established an English Speaking Nation (ESN) Corps of highly qualified English teachers, trainers, and mentors.



In spring 2021, six instructors from Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL International) delivered 60 hours of training to 93 carefully-selected Core Teacher Trainers. After 16 months, TESOL, George Mason University, and American Councils staff visited elementary and secondary-school classrooms across 12 regions in Uzbekistan to evaluate the success of the ESN:STT program. Exhaustive classroom observations, focus groups, teacher interviews, and meetings with the director of the Institute of Retaining and Advanced Training of Public Education painted a clear picture of this initiative's impact: ESN:STT created an international community of teachers with bolstered English teaching skills and a buoyed sense of gratitude and pride.

Since the start of ESN:STT, more than 18,000 English as foreign language teachers have been trained, including 450 Core Teacher Trainers and Regional Peer Mentors.

## ESN:STT Program Impact

450 teachers completed the Core Trainer Trainings—120 hours of coursework and a 20-hour practicum (observing master teachers followed by coach-supervised teaching).

The Avloni Research Institute, which designs and implements professional development courses for in-service teachers throughout Uzbekistan, integrated ESN materials into their curriculum.

180 teachers completed the Teaching English Through English (TETE) course, comprised of 10 modules plus a course orientation.

Participants received professional development credits—9.5 credits out of the required 18—toward their teacher licensing from the Ministry of Education.

Working in regional groups, Core Trainers (CTs) and ESN U.S. Coaches designed a 60-hour cascading course to train 690 Regional Peer Mentors (RPMs) who then support training for over 18,000 English teacher mentees.

ESN conducted TOEFL Proficiency Testing of approximately 2,000 teachers nationwide, with results ranging from B2 to A2 level.

CTs and RPMs strengthened their online instruction skills by developing videos on updated teaching practices.

Teachers who received ESN TESOL certificates received 50% salary increases from the Ministry of Education.



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Academic Integrity Programming in Ukraine

From 2020 to 2022, the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv funded the Academic Integrity and Quality (Academic IQ) Initiative to formalize Ukrainian education standards with an eye toward sustainable academic integrity across the country. The Academic IQ Initiative grew out of two previous American Councils projects in Ukraine: the Strengthening Academic Integrity in Ukraine Program (SAIUP) and its secondary-school counterpart, Seeding Academic Integrity into Secondary Schools (SAISS).

While enacting changes in schools, SAIUP and SAISS also supported policy-level changes to ensure that progress would become permanent. The initiatives attracted nationwide support for academic integrity in Ukraine.

- ◆ Some 20,000 university faculty and students were trained on best practices and implemented enforcement policies in universities across Ukraine
- ◆ Three major legislative advances in education reform were enacted in Ukraine: The Law on Education Framework, the Law on Higher Education, and the Law on Secondary Education
- ◆ Dozens of higher education institutions offered an online course on academic writing and ethics, developed by American Councils and its partners, that was completed by approximately 8,000 Ukrainian secondary school teachers.

Academic integrity infrastructure on campus became a legal requirement for all accredited Ukrainian universities as of 2017. Education Quality Assurance Centers monitor universities' compliance to this standard, while the State Service for Education Quality agency oversees the same in secondary schools.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# EducationUSA Advising Services

For more than 30 years, American Councils has proudly administered EducationUSA advising services, providing orientation and information on opportunities for students in Eurasia and Central Asia to study at American colleges and universities. American Councils has recently increased its use of Massive Online Open Courses or MOOCs in its 16 advising centers throughout the region, and woven the theme of academic integrity into cohort advising programs. For example, a new academic writing component was added to help students understand how to use citations, and a contemporary module explains and clarifies the American definition of plagiarism.

In 2022, American Councils began managing the six existing EducationUSA advising centers located throughout Indonesia—two in Jakarta and one each in Banda Aceh, Surabaya, Malang, and Makassar—that help prospective Indonesian students develop competitive applications for higher education in the U.S.

American Councils has also recently supported EducationUSA in the Middle East/North Africa region, building relationships between the U.S. Embassy and Regional Educational Advising Coordinators (REACs) and offering college fairs focused on areas of study—including tourism and hospitality management; arts and cultural preservation; and allied health services.

In a 2021 survey of Education USA participants:

- ◆ **85.66%** said that working with EducationUSA made them **more confident** in their university options.
- ◆ **89.68%** felt more motivated to **go to the United States** for university.
- ◆ More than **99%** of participants believed the information provided by EducationUSA was **“accurate”** (99.74%), **“comprehensive”** (99.74%), and **“current”** (99.39%).



Turkmenistan College Prep Program Undergraduate Cohort Advising (UCA) alumna Gozel Dovranova, an EducationUSA Opportunity Funds advisee, received a full scholarship from MIT to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree in chemical engineering.



# Language Training, Assessment, and Research

Since its founding in 1974, American Councils has maintained a unique focus on world languages and their utility in today's public and private sector job market, emphasizing the languages and skills most desired by employers worldwide.

“ I couldn't believe that I was accepted to MIT—I even thought I was dreaming—but when I finally realized that it was real, I understood that this acceptance was actually a reward of my hard work and the work of my EdUSA adviser, my teachers, my parents, and many other kind-hearted people who helped me during this process. As a UCA cohort, I have benefited from the knowledge of the professionals who are best in their fields; learned so many things about the education system of the USA and the application process; had a chance to be friends with my like-minded peers; and the most important one: being brave. ”



Every year, American Councils...

- supports more than 1,500 students of critical languages;
- develops foreign language test items for the U.S. Government in languages such as Bengali, Chinese, Portuguese, Tajik, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese; and
- administers more than 40,000 proficiency tests to validate gains in less-commonly-taught languages.

The benefits of immersive language training, research, and assessment:

FOR PARTICIPANTS

- ◆ New or enhanced speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills in world languages
- ◆ Expanded cultural and contemporary knowledge about countries critical to global security and economic prosperity
- ◆ Employers that value their language skills, global knowledge, experience, and agility in numerous social and professional environments

FOR INSTITUTIONS

- ◆ Greater availability of quality language instruction for foreign participants
- ◆ Greater continuity of learning from targeted users to practical use

FOR POLICYMAKERS

- ◆ Data-proven opportunities to improve teacher training and curricula
- ◆ Advanced language training for academics, diplomats, and entrepreneurs whose work is essential to America's prosperity

In 2022 and 2023, American Councils was awarded a series of contracts from the U.S. Government to develop over 1,500 critical language reading and listening comprehension test items in Bengali, Bulgarian, German, Indonesian, Mandarin Chinese, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Pashto, Persian, Portuguese, Tagalog, Tajik, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese. Six months later, on the heels of that success, DLI awarded an additional contract for test items in Arabic, Pashto, Cebuano, Hebrew, Romanian, and Ukrainian.

Support for language proficiency testing represents a core aspect of American Councils language acquisition programming. American Councils focuses intensively on its quality control process for test item development, which starts with passage and audio selection, continues through item writing and review, and ends with a blind review of test items.

Research has shown that, globally, higher English proficiency correlates to higher gross domestic product (GDP), net income, productivity, and quality of life.

*(2020 Education First, "EF English Language Proficiency Index")*

The importance of foreign language proficiency has never been more evident as nearly one-third of employers around the world depend on employees with language skills other than English; in fact, nearly one in four U.S. employers admit that lack of foreign language skills has prevented them from pursuing or resulted in them losing business opportunities.

*(ACTFL, "Making Languages Our Business: Addressing Foreign Language Demand Among U.S. Employers." Aug/Sept 2019)*

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# American Councils Research Center (ARC)

ARC elevates the success of American Councils language-based programming with industry-leading data and research on how language is learned and used in education and the workplace. Policymakers at all levels rely on ARC's data, published in nationally- and internationally-recognized materials, such as:

- ◆ Second Language Proficiency Development
- ◆ Dual Language Immersion (DLI) Research Alliance
- ◆ National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Report
- ◆ The Effect of DLI on Student Achievement: Utah Public Schools Study
- ◆ America's Languages: American Academy of Arts & Sciences

With funding provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and support from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, American Councils Research Center launched the America's Languages Initiative, a three-year project to aggregate local, state, and federal language education initiatives in one interactive online resource. The website serves as a guide to leading U.S. language programs and practices, aiming to boost employment, learning, and technological opportunities by broadening access to excellent instruction in more languages to a greater number of students. The America's Languages Initiative relies on a coalition of representatives from academe, business, government, indigenous and heritage communities, and NGOs working to strengthen all of America's languages, including native, English, and sign languages.



image by freepik.com

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# The Language Flagship

An initiative of the Defense Language and National Security Education Office (DLNSEO), The Language Flagship provides programming to students of all academic majors and language proficiencies who want to master Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, or Urdu. Each language program starts with a domestic component that prepares students to progress overseas, where they are immersed in formal language coursework, tutorials, conversation partners, excursions and overnight trips, internships with local organizations, and homestays with local families. At the end of the 2022-23 program, 80-85% of American Councils' administered Flagship graduates had achieved professional working proficiency (the level required for government service or advanced graduate study in the region) or higher in speaking, listening, and reading.



From 2017 to 2022, the American Councils Research Center team examined the language proficiency gains of **3,311 U.S. language learners** participating in summer, semester, and academic year programs: **1,182** were learning in virtual programs; **2,129** were studying abroad.

Data compared the efficacy of **virtual vs. in-person learning** for students of different languages and at different stages of their studies, including **early-stage, mid-level, and advanced learners** of Arabic, Azeri, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu.

Comparisons showed that nearly all students achieved some measurable gains during their programs, but **those learning in person had gains that consistently surpassed** their peers on virtual programs.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Critical Language Scholarship Program (CLS)

American Councils administers intensive language immersion programs each summer for approximately 555 participants of the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) program to study Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, and Urdu at 25 institute sites overseas. Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, CLS increases the number of Americans with advanced linguistic skills critical to national security and economic prosperity; improves the ability of Americans to engage with people of other countries in the language of those countries and build mutual understanding; and develops overseas capacity for U.S. students' study of critical languages.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Manmeet Pelia is an alumna of the 2021 CLS Punjabi Program, hosted virtually by the American Institute of Indian Studies in Chandigarh, India. After graduating from the United States Air Force Academy with degrees in electrical and computer engineering, Manmeet plans to participate in the Language Enabled Airmen Program (LEAP) to continue to grow her language and cross-cultural communication skills for the U.S. Department of Defense. Manmeet hopes to one day serve as a researcher or test pilot in the space community, using her Punjabi to foster diplomacy and cross-cultural collaboration.



Colby Santana (center left)—of proud Brazilian extraction, who studied Russian at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine—completed the CLS program in Kyrgyzstan and plans to return to school to work as an

English Teaching Assistant and youth rugby coach. During his time abroad with CLS, Colby explored Kyrgyz athletics and served as a commentator for the Kyrgyzstan National Rugby Team, forming unforgettable

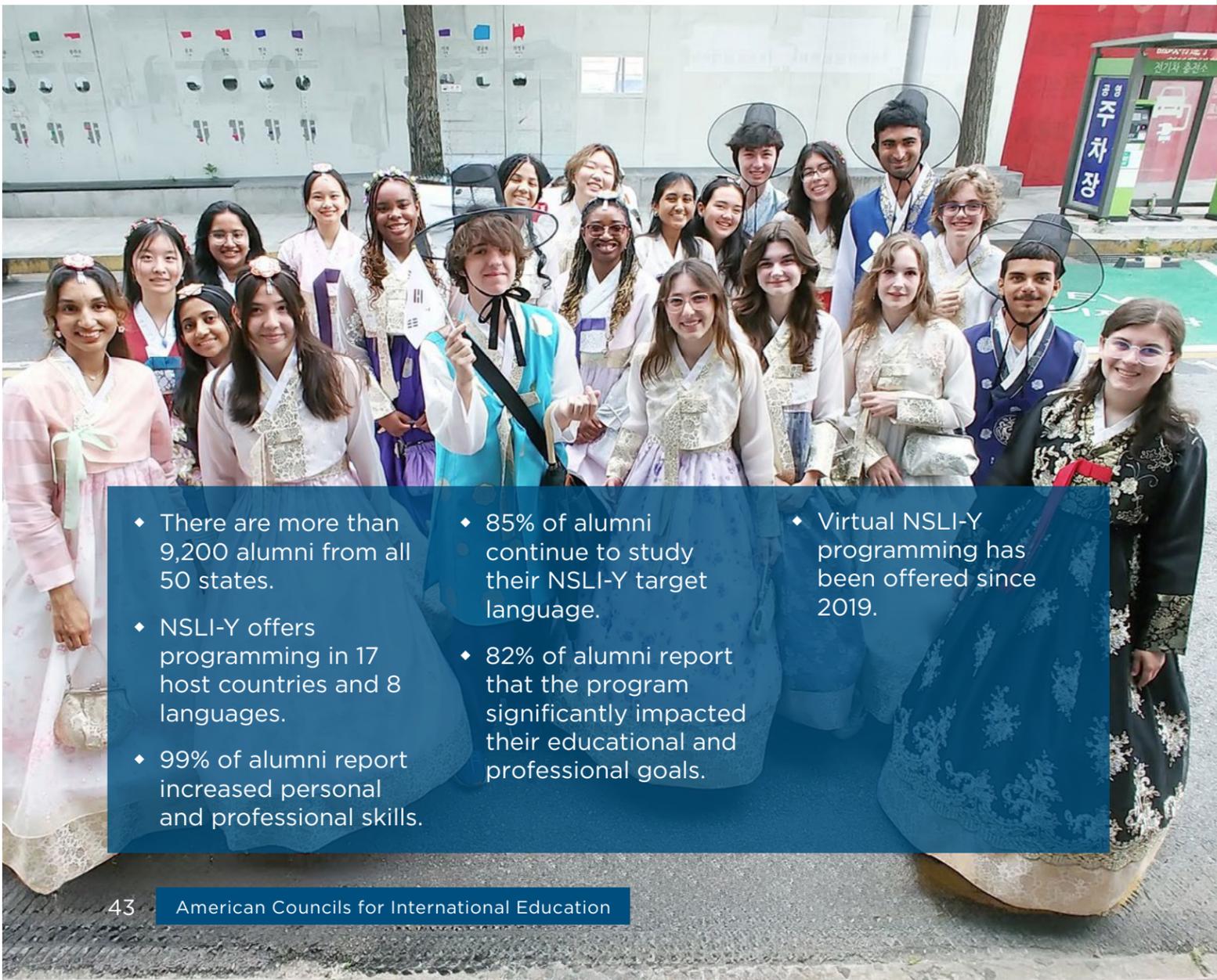
cross-cultural connections that he carries with him today. He hopes that teaching English to young people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia will broaden their understanding of American identity and culture.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# National Security Language Initiative for Youth (NSLI-Y)

INVESTING IN U.S. CAPACITY AND COMPETITIVENESS

NSLI-Y provides merit-based scholarships for eligible high school students (ages 15 to 18) to learn less commonly taught languages—Arabic, Chinese (Mandarin), Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Persian (Tajik), Russian, and Turkish—in overseas immersion programs.



- ◆ There are more than 9,200 alumni from all 50 states.
- ◆ NSLI-Y offers programming in 17 host countries and 8 languages.
- ◆ 99% of alumni report increased personal and professional skills.
- ◆ 85% of alumni continue to study their NSLI-Y target language.
- ◆ 82% of alumni report that the program significantly impacted their educational and professional goals.
- ◆ Virtual NSLI-Y programming has been offered since 2019.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



William Yuen Yee, an alumnus of NSLI-Y (2018) and CLS (2019), was transformed during summers abroad in Taiwan and China studying Chinese. He encourages other young people to learn languages and study abroad: *“It will give you a greater appreciation for the United States of America and its... melting pot of cultures. Today, I’m Chinese. I’m American. And I’m proud of it.”* Since completing his NSLI-Y program, William has served as an NSLI-Y alumni representative, contributed to the alumni association, and launched a mentorship program for applicants. He also organized a two-day virtual conference for middle school students across the U.S. and Chinese-speaking regions, with funding awarded by the U.S. State Department’s Citizen Diplomacy Action Fund. After graduating from Columbia University with a double major in political science and East Asian studies, Will was awarded another scholarship from CLS to study Indonesian, and was selected as the Michel David-Weill scholarship laureate.

Vanessa Rogers Wright describes NSLI-Y as “the first domino in a long line of positive outcomes.” It was an NSLI-Y event with the State Department that introduced her to the possibility of a career as a Foreign Service Officer and inspired her to earn a B.A. in international studies and political science, with minors in Asian studies and TESOL, from the University of Central Arkansas. Vanessa carefully curated her academic experience to complement the Foreign Service. As an undergraduate she received Gilman, Freeman-ASIA, Global Korea, and Critical Language scholarships, and interned with the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, the Clinton Foundation, and the NSLI-Y team at iEARN-USA. By graduation, Vanessa had achieved advanced-low oral proficiency in Korean. She was named a 2023 Rangel Fellow, which covers a significant portion of her graduate school tuition and living expenses and secures her entrance into the Foreign Service upon completing her master’s degree.





American Councils' professional and workforce development offerings leverage internships and practical training across age groups, programs, and global locales.

From the classroom to the research lab, to the job site, to the office, in programs ranging from as brief as a week to as long as a year – students, faculty, and professionals emerge primed to lead and thrive in an increasingly competitive global economy.

With an eye toward closing the skills gap and developing talent worldwide, American Councils' administration of professional programming is intentionally curated to promote:

- ◆ business and entrepreneurial skills
- ◆ critical thinking
- ◆ English language skills
- ◆ experiential learning (virtual/in-person internships)
- ◆ mentorship opportunities
- ◆ academic and career advising
- ◆ work skills development

# Professional & Workforce Development

EVERY SKILL ACQUIRED, EVERY EXPERIENCE LOGGED, EVERY RELATIONSHIP FORMED, AND EVERY IDEA INSPIRED FORGES ANOTHER KEY TO UNLOCK OPPORTUNITY.

## Long-Term Impact and Enduring Ties

Business Leader Alumni survey results as far back as 2015 illustrate the programs' lasting impact, with graduates reporting that participation:

HELPED THEIR CAREERS

91%

IMPROVED THEIR COMPANIES' GROWTH POTENTIAL

84%

IMPROVED THEIR COMPANIES' PARTNERSHIP WITH AMERICAN BUSINESSES

84%

Participants also reported that they:

ACQUIRED VALUABLE KNOWLEDGE

73%

WERE INSPIRED BY WHAT THEY LEARNED AND THE RELATIONSHIPS THEY MADE

73%

REMAIN CONNECTED WITH AMERICANS THEY MET ON THIS PROGRAM

87%

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

In partnership with the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia, Nourjahan Jemaa—an alumna of both the Workshop for Youth Leaders in English Teaching (WYLET) and the Youth Exchange and Study (YES) programs—helps local graduates develop their professional portfolios and improve their English through her Employability for Peace project.



## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Young Southeast Asia Leaders Initiative Professional Fellows Program (YSEALI PFP)

YSEALI PFP supports 200 fellows from Southeast Asia and 50 from the U.S., ages 25 to 35, on a two-way exchange program designed to connect, unite, and elevate emerging leaders in Southeast Asia and the U.S. Participating countries include Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam.



YSEALI PFP alumnus Ryan Gersava, founder of Virtualahan—an organization that supports job access for people with barriers to employment—was named one of *Forbes'* 30 Under 30 Asia 2021.



Thi Huong Dang, a 2020 YSEALI PFP fellow from Vietnam, won the Social Entrepreneur category at the 2021 Women of the Future Awards Southeast Asia. Her social enterprise, HopeBox, gives Vietnamese women who have survived domestic violence shelter and tools to build independent new lives.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# Professional Fellows Program on Governance and Society (PFP EUR)

The PFP on Governance and Society is a two-way global exchange that promotes mutual understanding, leadership and professional skills, and sustainable partnerships between emerging leaders of Europe and Eurasia and the U.S. Each year, 40 to 55 young leaders, ages 25 to 40, network with their American counterparts while learning first-hand about U.S. policy and working environments in tailored four-week fellowship placements.

After the U.S.-based fellowships, selected American participants travel overseas to help the foreign participants implement projects in their local communities—ensuring collaboration and continuity among fellows, no matter where in the world they are. This unique program model expands training and education to hundreds of overseas professionals who are not able to travel to the U.S.

Placement sites have included:

- ◆ Congressional offices
- ◆ State government agencies
- ◆ City halls
- ◆ University centers for innovation and entrepreneurship
- ◆ World Bank
- ◆ International Finance Corporation
- ◆ Dell Computers
- ◆ Starbucks
- ◆ Xerox Corporation



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

# USAID Uzbekistan Youth Employment Skills (YES)

YES is a five-year initiative investing in Uzbekistani youth as the future drivers of their country's economic and social development.

Uzbekistan has more than one million people with disabilities—and more than 1,400 students with disabilities in the Fergana region, which was selected to pilot the YES program, empowering youth with disabilities and their communities to fully participate in the economy. Together with our local partner Sharoit Plus, American Councils developed a high school entrepreneurship and economics curriculum that considers the interest of youth with disabilities and provided real-life learning opportunities for groups that have previously been excluded. American Councils is implementing the program on behalf of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

## Program Achievements through 2023

- ◆ Curriculum framework for grades 8 to 11 developed and approved by the Ministry of Preschool and School Education of Uzbekistan.
- ◆ 3,000 students enrolled for the pilot in 18 schools.
- ◆ 2,000 Grade 8 and 1,000 Grade 11 textbooks printed.
- ◆ 6,500 students tested under Randomized Control Trial baseline assessment.
- ◆ Newly created after-school Junior Business Clubs and teaching and learning materials created in 18 pilot schools.
- ◆ More than 150 employers engaged.



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