

Spotlight on: Overseas Opportunities for U.S. Undergraduate and Graduate Students

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND AREA STUDIES PROGRAM

For almost 40 years, the American Councils Russian Language and Area Studies Program (RLASP) has offered U.S. students high-quality overseas instruction in Russian language and culture as well as unparalleled opportunities to engage with Russian society. The program began in the spring of 1976, when American Councils President Dr. Dan Davidson, then associate professor of Russian at Bryn Mawr College, led a contingent of 14 U.S. students for a semester's study at the Pushkin Institute of Russian Language in Moscow, USSR. That year, Dr. Davidson and his students were among only a handful of U.S.

passport-holders granted visas for long-term study in the Soviet Union. Throughout the program's early history, its organizers engaged in careful negotiations with Soviet authorities to bring as many as 30 students to Moscow annually.

Today, RLASP thrives as American Councils' longest running program, counting more than 6,000 alumni from over 300 U.S. universities and colleges. It is also one of the country's most respected study abroad programs, enabling its undergraduate and graduate students to develop a uniquely nuanced understanding of Russian language and culture through intensive study and sustained cultural immersion.

ENERGY IN CENTRAL ASIA PROGRAM

The Energy in Central Asia Program (ECAP) brings U.S. undergraduate and graduate students to Almaty, Kazakhstan to study the economic, political, and environmental aspects of Central Asia's booming energy industry. Hosted by KIMEP University, one of Central Asia's leading institutions of higher education, the four-week summer program provides 60 hours of coursework exploring the politics of oil and gas, energy commodities, and the potential ecological impact of rapid growth. Courses are taught in English by KIMEP faculty in close consultation with American Councils staff. ECAP has no foreign language requirement; on program, students receive approximately 15 hours of instruction in Russian or Kazakh geared toward their proficiency level (including elementary).

During the program's final week, students participate in a five-day practicum, during which they interview local industry leaders, environmental activists, government officials, and policy analysts in Almaty and Astana to learn more about the energy market from the diverse perspectives of key players in the industry. Students who successfully complete the program receive up to seven semester academic credits in Business and Eurasian Studies.



Full-time, in-country American Councils staff members oversee all aspects of the program, assist participants in administrative and personal matters, and provide 24-hour emergency assistance. American Councils staff members also conduct comprehensive pre-departure and in-country orientations for all participants. Orientation topics include culture shock, emergency procedures, health and safety, and Central Asian academic culture.

Designed to engage students without extensive previous study of Russia or Eurasia, ECAP represents an important expansion of American Councils study abroad offerings for students of business, economics, politics, and environmental studies.

RLASP provides academic year, semester, and summer pro-gramming. Participants attend approximately 20 hours per week of coursework in Russian language, history, culture, mass media, and literature in small groups of three to five students. RLASP courses are taught by host-institution faculty at Moscow International University, the Russian State Pedagogical University in St. Petersburg, the KORA Russian Language Center in Vladimir, and Kazakh National University in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Program participants receive university credit in Russian history and area studies as well as advanced Russian language.

While students have the option to reside in university dormitories, the vast majority now live with Russian host families, who provide invaluable insights into Russian daily life, and a relaxed, supportive environment for conversational practice outside the classroom.

Full-time U.S. resident directors provide ongoing logistical support, oversee academic programs, arrange weekly excursions and extended group travel, and provide 24-hour emergency assistance. In addition, resident directors manage a wide range of activities designed to ensure participants actively engage with Russian society throughout their time abroad. These include a peer tutoring program, which matches each



U.S. student with a Russian-speaking counterpart at his or her host university to help with language issues and foster important social connections; discussion groups that bring participants together with local students to explore contemporary social issues; and internships at Russian businesses, cultural institutions, schools, museums, media centers, and research institutes. Resident directors also work with participants to help them pursue a rich array of personal interests and hobbies while abroad. In recent years, RLASP students have participated in Russian ballroom dancing competitions, local choirs, ultimate Frisbee, hiking clubs, and university basketball and soccer teams.

EURASIAN REGIONAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM

Since 1996, RLASP has served as an important prototype for American Councils Eurasian Regional Language Program, which offers intensive, small group instruction, host-family housing, and uniquely structured immersion activities for U.S. students of Armenian, Azeri, Buryat, Georgian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Pashto, Tajik, Shor, Tatar, Turkmen, Ukrainian, and Uzbek. Many of these programs are the only opportunities available for students to study lesser-taught languages in an overseas, immersion setting with professional support, U.S. academic credit, and ongoing program oversight. More than 300 U.S. graduate and undergraduate students have completed the program since its inception.



DID YOU KNOW?

WHICH COUNTRY'S FORMER PRESIDENT VISITED AC'S OFFICE IN 2013?

ROZA OTUNBAYEVA, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KYRGYZSTAN

WHO WAS AC'S FIRST UNIVERSITY PARTNER IN TANZANIA?

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF ZANZIBAR