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# INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

## THE NEGLECTED DIMENSION OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

### *Recommendations for the Next President*

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The next president of the United States will face foreign policy and national security challenges as daunting as any since the beginning of the Cold War. To address these challenges effectively, he will have to break out of the old policy constructs, avoid the shallow rhetoric that masquerades as policy, transcend political divides that do not reflect today's realities, and lead Americans to new approaches that advance American interests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Among the most fundamental of these challenges is the need to restore America's international legitimacy — to address the pervasive perception in the world that America's interests, as America conceives of and pursues those interests today, no longer reflect what the founders referred to as a decent respect for the opinions of mankind. The very source of U.S. international legitimacy—the idea that America, uniquely among nations, aligns its interests with the aspirations of the world's people—has somehow become thought of in much of this country's political discourse as a quaint anachronism, a luxury that we cannot afford in the age of global terror. The vision that propelled the creators of the post-World War II international order — that America's security lay in a secure world where people were free to pursue their aspirations for themselves and for their children — has somehow come to be thought of as too “soft.” If the United States is to restore its international legitimacy, our political leadership will need to rediscover—and lead us to rededicate ourselves to—the eternal foundations of this nation that produced that legitimacy in the first place.

In the public dialogue of the past few years, the means for addressing this issue have tended to

be lumped under the rubric of “public diplomacy.” This is a very imprecise term, and no two parties to any conversation about it seem to share the same concept of what it means. However one defines public diplomacy, there is a widespread recognition, which we share, that the United States is doing poorly at it, and there have been at least a dozen proposals (and still counting) for reorganizing the public diplomacy function within or outside of the U.S. government. Although we agree that the abolition of the United States Information Agency and the incorporation of its functions into the State Department was a mistake that needs to be rectified, and we support the reorganization efforts, we do not believe that the dialogue would be served by our adding yet another government reorganization proposal to the mix.

Our purpose is to drill down beneath that level, and begin where all good public diplomacy must start: with the creation of a better foundation for understanding. Our focus is on what will need to be done, under any reorganization scheme, to make the *international education and exchange* part of public diplomacy work.

At the heart of public diplomacy, in our view—and essential to the success of the rest of it—is the critical task of building, conducting, and sustaining the long-term relationships through which the world most fundamentally “knows” Americans and forms its core assumptions about what America “is.” From the creation of the Fulbright Program to the founding of the Peace Corps, the post-World War II generation pursued these relationships as a conscious matter of national policy—a way of aligning America's interests with those of the world and investing in a more peaceful world in which the United States

could be secure. We need to embrace that vision again as we confront a new era of global connectedness and global challenges.

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Many of our current political leaders have failed to grasp fully that although much changed on September 11, 2001, much did not. Some things that were true before 9/11 are still true today. Among them are that the United States, for all our power, cannot be secure in a world that does not trust us and that resents and resists our leadership; that the United States, as any state, needs friends and allies; and that the United States cannot be effective in, much less lead, a world that it neither listens to nor understands. We know from polling data that Americans “get” this at some level. It is the task of the next generation of leadership to reassure Americans that these fundamental principles are just as valid today as they ever were.

International education forms the foundation for addressing these challenges, and it is an indispensable component of the revived public diplomacy that must begin to rebuild America’s global reputation. Yet the United States today lacks the policy instruments to realize international education’s potential. It is time, as a nation, to be purposeful about international education—to employ it consciously, in a coordinated manner, as one of the tools in the national toolkit for engaging with the world in pursuit of the objectives that we share with the world’s people. It is through international education that we establish a lasting foundation for dialogue and partnership with the rest of the

world and create the conditions for lasting global peace, security, and well-being.

We strongly support the recommendation of the CSIS Commission on Smart Power, that “an effective public diplomacy must include exchanges of ideas, peoples, and information through person-to-person educational and cultural exchanges....” As the commission said, “We must strengthen and expand America’s study abroad programs,” and “the next administration should make it a priority to increase the number of international students coming to the United States to study and do research....” Poll after poll—including our own nonpartisan polling—has demonstrated very high levels of public support for these measures, and high public understanding that future generations will require international skills.

The single most important factor that has been lacking for such an effort to succeed is focused leadership in the White House. **We call on the next president to announce a major international education initiative designed explicitly to foster an America that knows, understands, and is able to communicate with the world, and to strengthen the relationships through which the American people and the world’s people can relate to, interact with, and understand each other.**

This initiative should have three objectives: (1) the internationalization of higher education in the United States, centered on a national program to establish study abroad as an integral part of U.S. undergraduate education; (2) the restoration of America’s status as a magnet for international students and scholars, the next generation of foreign leaders, teachers, and innovators; and (3) the substantial strengthening of international exchange and volunteer-service programs to foster a long-term reservoir of good will for our nation.

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## INTERNATIONALIZING U.S. EDUCATION

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For the effective conduct of public diplomacy, the United States must have a citizenry that is better informed about and more prepared to engage the world. The current paucity of international content in U.S. education generally must be addressed. Curricula must be internationalized at all levels so that everyone who graduates from college in the United States receives an international education. We must bolster specialized study to produce the high-level, advanced international and foreign-language expertise that is required today in government, business, education, the media, and other fields. And study abroad must become the norm, not the exception, for American college students.

Curricular responsibilities in the area of internationalization will of course remain the responsibility of the institutions, school districts, and states, as they should. Our colleague associations—the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and the American Council on Education—have done a great deal of useful work on the internationalization of the campus. But America’s lack of international competence is a national security liability, and there is no substitute for an overarching national policy, articulated from the president’s bully pulpit and backed by federal funding where appropriate. Such a policy should:

- ◆ Set an objective that international education becomes an integral component of U.S. undergraduate education so that, in ten years’ time, every student will graduate from college with proficiency in a foreign language and a basic understanding of at least one world area.
- ◆ Promote cultural and foreign-language study in primary and secondary schools so

that entering college students will have greater proficiency in these areas.

- ◆ Through graduate and professional training and research, enhance the nation’s capacity to produce the international, regional, international-business, and foreign-language expertise required for U.S. global leadership and security.
- ◆ Encourage international institutional partnerships that will facilitate internationalized curricula, collaborative research, and faculty and student mobility.

### **Establishing study abroad as an integral component of undergraduate education**

The most important role for the U.S. government, however, is to enact a comprehensive national program to establish study abroad as an integral component of U.S. undergraduate education.

Far too few American college students – about 1 percent – study abroad each year, and study abroad participants are primarily white, female, and concentrated in certain majors and a handful of popular destinations. Study abroad opportunities are often beyond the reach of nontraditional students and students of limited financial means. At the same time, polls by the American Council on Education show that most students, when they enter college, have both the desire and the intention to study abroad.

In a recent op-ed in the *Christian Science Monitor*, 9/11 Commission leaders Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton note the critical importance of study abroad. They write: “The U.S. cannot conduct itself effectively in a competitive international environment when our most educated citizens lack minimal exposure to, and understanding of, the world beyond U.S. borders. If we lack the ability to see ourselves as others see us – a skill imparted through the direct experience of living and studying abroad – then we diminish our ability to influence and persuade foreign governments and world opinion.” Kean and Hamilton go on to warn that “ignorance of the world is a national liability” and urge Congress to pass the Senator Paul Simon Study

Abroad Foundation Act, which is currently awaiting a vote in the Senate.

The Simon Act would create an independent entity to administer a national study abroad program with the following mandate: that at least one million U.S. undergraduate students will study abroad annually in ten years' time, and that study abroad opportunities will become more diverse in terms of participants, fields of study, and destinations, especially in the developing world. In addition to providing a pool of direct scholarships, the program would encourage higher education institutions to address the on-campus factors that most heavily impact study abroad participation – curriculum, faculty involvement, institutional leadership, programming – by making a commitment to institutional reform a prerequisite for access to federal funds.

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The legislation has resounding bipartisan support in Congress. It was recommended by a bipartisan commission whose members were appointed by the joint congressional leadership and the president. The commission was established at the behest of the late Senator Paul Simon, a Democrat, and was chaired by M. Peter McPherson, a Republican, who remains a leading supporter. Bipartisan legislative leadership to establish the program has been provided by Senators Dick Durbin and Norm Coleman, and by the late Representative Tom Lantos and Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen. Inexplicably, the Bush administration has failed to embrace the program. The next administration must provide strong leadership for its implementation and funding and—should the legislation fail to be enacted this year—for a new legislative push in the next Congress.

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## ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS: RESTORING AMERICA'S STATUS AS A MAGNET FOR THE WORLD'S FUTURE LEADERS AND INNOVATORS

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When asked by the *National Journal* to cite his biggest accomplishment as homeland security secretary, Michael Chertoff said, “We have made it dramatically harder to get into the country if you are a bad person.” That is indeed an essential success, but what Secretary Chertoff did not mention is that we have also made it dramatically harder to get into the country if you are a *good* person.

The next president will have to lead Congress and the American people to an understanding of the need to redress that balance, not because we all have short attention spans and have forgotten about security, as the secretary would have it, but because, with the perspective of time, we can recognize that openness to “good persons” is a crucial part of our security. Since 9/11, we have followed the disarming maxim that security trumps all: “When in doubt, keep them out.” But that gets it wrong. We have forgotten that being an open country is not antithetical to our security, but rather part of it.

What we really need are policies that maximize U.S. security *both* by identifying and screening out those who wish us ill, *and* by attracting and facilitating entry for the people we need to help us remain a great country. Whatever progress we may have made on the first part, we are not getting the second part right.

Until this century, the United States enjoyed the status of destination of choice for the world's international students and scholars, and we reaped great benefits from this status: the opportunity to educate the world's future leaders; the ability to attract the world's best talent to our universities and research institutes; the educational benefits that our students derived from foreign professors and from having other cultures represented on campus; and billions of dollars of spending in our economy.

This resource is now at risk. Although the United States still enrolls the largest number of international students simply because we have the largest higher education sector, by any relative measure U.S. competitiveness for international students has collapsed in this century as a result of vastly increased international competition, the unwelcoming environment created by post-9/11 security measures and anti-foreign attitudes, and the shattering of America's image in the world. International student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities fell after 9/11 and stood at 582,984 in the academic year 2006-07; it would be well over 700,000—some 25 percent higher—if pre-9/11 growth rates had continued.

Meanwhile, the international student market is exploding. Data on international student mobility are notoriously unreliable, but according to available UNESCO estimates, 2.7 million international students studied outside their home countries in 2005 compared to 1.68 million in 1999—an increase of 60 percent. The standard projection cited in the field is that this number will reach 7.2 million by 2025.

Competitor countries are pursuing this market aggressively. Over the most recent four-year period for which comparative data are available (2003-2006), international student enrollment in the United Kingdom increased by more than 80,000, in France and Australia by nearly 60,000, in Germany and Japan by more than 20,000. Regional hubs are springing up in the Asia/Pacific region to serve the growing international student population from that area. The United States has shared in none of this growth. Only now is international student enrollment in U.S. colleges and universities returning to the level of five years ago, and we are still far from the robust growth curve that we enjoyed before 9/11.

What explains this situation? Simply put, competitor countries (and regions—the European Union is a big and successful competitor) recognize international students as an asset and are implementing comprehensive strategies to attract them; the United States,

except at the rhetorical level, is not. The most competitive countries emphasize international recruitment as a matter of national policy. They have active outreach efforts, streamlined visa processes, and liberalized employment requirements to attract international students.

*When we turn away these students to our foreign competitors, we are denying future leaders an opportunity to know America, and we are sending them to know and develop life-long relationships with another country instead.*

In the United States, coordination among the federal agencies responsible for the recruitment and admission of international students is minimal (with the exception of the relationship between the State and Education Departments under the current secretaries). Despite improvements, the visa process is still unnecessarily onerous. Name checks, especially for students with Arabic names, can hold up visa applications indefinitely because of similarities to names on various watch lists. Students complain of disrespectful treatment at ports of entry. Once in the country, they become subject to a monitoring system—financed with a fee, now being raised to \$200, paid by the students—that was thrown up hastily after 9/11 and is easy to run afoul of, which can result in hassle, expense, and even deportation. During their sojourn in the United States, international students are often reluctant to travel internationally for academic conferences, vacations, or family visits, weddings, or funerals, because of uncertainty over being able to return. Efforts to make social security numbers and driver's licenses more secure have placed legitimate international students in a legal limbo where it is difficult-to-impossible for some to obtain these essential identifiers.

All of these security measures are important. But what is missing is an appreciation of the other side of the balance: when we turn away these

students to our foreign competitors, we are denying future leaders an opportunity to know America, and we are sending them to know and develop life-long relationships with another country instead. There is a security cost to that too—and unless we find a way to program that factor into our decision making, we are going to suffer a long-term net loss to our security and our international relationships in the name of protecting it.

The picture for international scholars and researchers is not much better. We lack comparative data on this population, and the number of scholars entering the United States is no longer declining. Nevertheless, according to the nation’s leading scientific associations, international scientists increasingly feel that the process of getting into the United States is no longer worth the trouble. Too many are still subjected to burdensome, unnecessary, and repetitive visa interviews and security clearance procedures. Exchange visitor regulations written for an earlier era hamper their mobility. Artificial limits on work (H-1B) visas and green cards make the United States a less attractive place for the world’s smartest people to explore the frontiers of science and create the next generation of knowledge.

We need what our competitors have: a comprehensive strategy for enhancing the attractiveness of the United States to international students and scholars. Such a strategy need not and should not lower the standards by which we seek to identify those who wish us ill and deny them access to the United States; on the contrary, it should permit the enhancement of those standards by reducing unnecessary and unproductive reviews and permitting greater focus where it is necessary, while facilitating the tradeoffs that will facilitate entry for legitimate and valued visitors. Action is required in three broad areas.

### (1) Coordination

There is currently no place in the government where the necessary tradeoffs can be made—where the relative costs and benefits of a proposal of an agency, bureau, or office to take

an action that would restrict access to the United States or make us less attractive can be weighed. In our government, this can only be done in the White House. The next president should:

- ◆ Create a capability in the White House to coordinate the actions of the myriad federal agencies that affect the ability of international students and scholars to gain access to the United States and their treatment while they are here.
- ◆ Provide strong visa-policy guidance for State and DHS, which now share visa responsibility but whose lowest-common-denominator decision making render it impossible to achieve rational visa policy.
- ◆ Instruct the secretary of homeland security to rationalize and integrate the department’s immigration functions and to strengthen the Office of Policy in order to infuse the agency with strong policy guidance.

### (2) Visa Reform

The State Department has done a good job of undoing the damage of the visa procedures that it imposed in the months following 9/11. But more needs to be done, and can only be done with the leadership of a new president. The next president should articulate and implement a balanced visa policy that facilitates access for students, scholars, and other valued visitors. The State Department should:

- ◆ Ask Congress to restore to the secretary of state the authority to grant U.S. consulates discretion to grant waivers of personal appearance (interviews) based on risk assessment, subject to Department of State guidance and approval.
- ◆ Refocus security clearances for scientists (“Mantis” reviews) on the most sensitive cases and eliminate them in cases where neither the applicant nor the applicant’s country present concerns.

- ◆ Establish “fast-track” visa reviews for frequent visitors and for students and scholars in legal status who leave the United States temporarily and require a new visa to return.
- ◆ Make better use of its overseas advising centers to facilitate visa reviews by prescreening applicants.

### (3) Immigration Reform

The tenor of the nation’s current immigration debate is entirely antithetical to effective public diplomacy. A nation whose daily newspapers and television news broadcasts scream anti-foreign sentiments can hardly expect to have a positive impact on foreign audiences. The next president must exercise strong leadership on behalf of comprehensive immigration reform that addresses illegal immigration while honoring immigrants’ contributions to our country. Immigration reform should include the following international education measures:

- ◆ Eliminate the legal requirement for applicants for student visas to demonstrate intent not to immigrate to the United States, at least for those pursuing degree programs. Students’ inability to prove this negative is the biggest cause of visa denials. This requirement is anachronistic in an age when we in fact seek international talent for our economy and benefit greatly from those foreign graduates of our universities who choose to stay here, for a short while or longer.
- ◆ Remove or adjust unrealistic caps on temporary and permanent employment-based visa categories (H-1B visas and green cards). The unavailability of a path to jobs in our economy and, if desired, permanent residency constitutes a disincentive for international students to come to the United States.
- ◆ Amend the Real ID Act so that holders of student and exchange visitor visas in valid

legal status do not face undue restrictions in obtaining driver’s licenses

- ◆ Permit short-term study (less than 90 days) on a tourist visa, as most other countries do. This would help revive America’s intensive English industry, which functioned as a primary gateway to U.S. higher education for international students before it was decimated after 9/11.

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### STRENGTHENING EXCHANGE AND VOLUNTEER-SERVICE PROGRAMS

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During the post-World War II era, it has been impossible not to be struck by the remarkable ability of the world’s most humble people to separate America from its policies. The reputation of the United States—what people see as “the real America”—has been able to survive periods when some of America’s policies have been intensely unpopular. One productive way to think about public diplomacy is that public diplomacy is what nurtures that idea of the real America, and thus helps get us through times when our policies are unpopular. And one of the most worrisome aspects of the current situation is that America’s reputation has declined so dramatically that people may be starting to question not just our policies, but their concept of what the United States really stands for.

What explains the hold that the idea of America has on people, which enables us to survive our sometimes-unpopular policies? Those who argue that all we have to do is sell our policies better, or do a better job of explaining to the world all the good things we do, miss the mark. First of all, policies do matter; our public diplomacy cannot indefinitely survive policies that violate our values. But more fundamentally, people know what the real America is not because we tell them what it is, but because they know real Americans. That, in a nutshell, is the genius of our exchange programs. When Congress began to downgrade these programs at the end of the Cold War, deeming them no longer a priority, it was excising the connective tissue that binds the

American people to the world's people. We now see that this was a mistake, and exchange programs are making a comeback. They need to come back a lot further.

Two things need to be done. First, exchange programs need to be expanded, better funded, and more appropriately regulated.

Although there has been considerable—and welcome—growth in exchange programs since 9/11, much of the growth has occurred in the area of exchanges with the Middle East. That is surely necessary, but it is important to remember that the payoff of exchange programs is often long-term. We cannot know how the friends we make today will benefit us tomorrow—in part because we cannot know where tomorrow's crises will come from. We cannot wait until some other region of the world replaces the Middle East as our biggest trouble spot to begin to strengthen exchange relationships with that part of the world. The United States is a global power with global interests. Politically tempting though it may be, it is ultimately self-defeating to use our exchange programs to respond to today's crises. If we aim to have robust exchange relationships with the entire world, we will not have to jump-start them after the crisis occurs.

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For this to happen, the next administration must maintain the growth curve for funding for exchange programs that we have enjoyed over the past few years. The administration must also move to address the issue of the regulation

of exchange programs. Exchange programs continue to be hampered by a federal regulatory regime that has lacked consistency and predictability, and exchange-program participants have suffered from the same visa and monitoring problems that have plagued international students. Although appropriate checks and controls are necessary, the next president should instruct the State Department that exchange programs serve important national interests and should be encouraged, not unnecessarily restricted.

The other thing that must be done is that voluntary service opportunities for Americans abroad—particularly the Peace Corps—must be expanded. The Peace Corps is arguably the most effective public diplomacy program ever invented, and it is so precisely because people in communities around the world have formed their impressions of the real America through Peace Corps Volunteers they have known. It is possible to visit communities that have not had Peace Corps Volunteers for a decade or more and to meet people there who still have affection for America because of their affection for Peace Corps Volunteers that they knew years ago. We cannot buy that result with any information program.

Now nearing 50, the Peace Corps remains one of America's most popular and effective programs abroad—an astounding statement for a federal bureaucracy. This success results from the uniqueness of the Peace Corps' mission, and from the Peace Corps' ability to change with the times without losing sight of that essential mission. The Peace Corps provides trained volunteers to live with the people of poor communities and help them work toward development objectives defined by the communities themselves. Volunteers share their skills with their communities, but also learn from and are enriched by their communities, and they bring their experiences back home to enrich Americans' understanding of other peoples. (Hence the near-universal refrain that one hears from returned Peace Corps Volunteers: "I gained more than I gave.")

It is impossible to overstate the importance of the concepts of reciprocal learning and responsiveness to local communities for public diplomacy. The America that people learn about from Peace Corps Volunteers is not an America that sells itself to them, has all the answers, or gives them things. It is an America that respects them, listens to them, shares with them, and learns from them—and that is an America that people can love. These concepts are absent from much of today's public diplomacy conversation; that conversation would benefit greatly from focusing on what has made the Peace Corps successful.

Given this success, it is a mystery that the Peace Corps, with 8,000 volunteers and trainees, remains smaller today than it was in its first years of operation, unable to serve many

countries and communities that would welcome volunteers. We endorse the National Peace Corps Association's call to double the Peace Corps' size, although the proposed target date of March 1, 2011—the Peace Corps' 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary—is unrealistic. To maintain its sterling reputation and its public diplomacy success, the Peace Corps should grow only at a pace that enables it to continue to recruit, train, and appropriately place volunteers in excellent programs and protect volunteer health, safety, and security. In that spirit, we recommend that the next president aim to increase the Peace Corps' size by 50 percent by March 1, 2011, and to double its size by the end of his first term—and commit the necessary resources up front to enable this to happen. This would amount to 25 percent growth per year—an ambitious objective by any standard.

**To learn more about our work on international education issues, contact:**



1307 New York Avenue, NW Suite 800  
Washington, DC 20005

Tel: 202.737.3699 ♦ Fax: 202.737.3657

E-mail: [govrel@nafsa.org](mailto:govrel@nafsa.org) ♦ <http://www.nafsa.org>