

INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS:

A Proven Investment in America



International educational and cultural exchange programs are a proven investment in America – in our economy, our people, and our foreign policy interests.

The Alliance for International Exchange recommends that international exchange programs be an essential part of the Trump Administration’s policy priorities because they **drive the U.S. economy, advance American foreign policy interests, and support American businesses, families, and communities.**

**International exchange programs
are an economic and diplomatic engine for America**

Driving America’s Economy

- International university students contributed **\$43.8 billion** to the U.S. economy in 2023-24.
- BridgeUSA exchange participants contributed at least **\$811.2 million** to the U.S. economy in 2023.

Advancing American Interests and Values

International exchanges allow the U.S. to build networks with more than 155 countries, addressing foreign policy priorities such as:

- Strategically engaging and countering China
- Growing our influence in South America and countering the influence of Venezuela
- Building a more united and economically prosperous Western Hemisphere

Creating Future American Leaders

- Studying and traveling abroad helps to build careers. Nearly **9 out of 10** youth say they believe travel experiences increase employability.
- **73% of employers** agree that increased international mobility makes Americans and the U.S. more globally competitive.

Telling America’s Story

- **4 out of 5** Americans feel international exchange programs enhance the image of their community as a good place to live.
- **94% of exchange students** from Muslim-majority countries reported that they have a **deeper, more favorable view of American culture** after their year in the U.S.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE INCOMING TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Policy Priority #1: Support a robust appropriation for Department of State international exchange programs

- **Funding for ECA exchange programs grew by 17% during the first Trump Administration**, and we recommend that the second Trump Administration continue this trend.

Policy Priority #2: Support and expand Department of State BridgeUSA private sector exchange programs

- BridgeUSA programs, all limited-term and non-immigrant, contribute to the success of American business, education, and family life. BridgeUSA programs are privately funded and come **at no cost to the U.S. taxpayer**.

Policy Priority #3: Increase the number of international students studying in the U.S.

- **The U.S. hosted 1,126,690 international college/university students in the 2023-24 academic year** (just 6% of total U.S. enrollment). 92% of U.S. colleges and universities said that they want to increase international student enrollment over the next five years, and we must seize this opportunity.

Policy Priority #4: Create more access for American students and young professionals to study and work abroad

- The U.S. needs more Americans traveling abroad to keep pace with other countries. Only 280,000 American studied abroad in 2022-23, while more than 1 million international students came to the U.S. We must right this imbalance.

Policy Priority #5: Ensure effective and secure processing of exchange visitor and international student visas by the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs

- A well-resourced Consular Affairs is able to encourage the continued mobility of non-immigrant exchange participants and international students to the U.S., ensuring we continue to benefit from the economic and diplomatic impact of these programs.