

**ORAL STATEMENT BY
DR. DAN E. DAVIDSON
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN COUNCILS FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION
AND
PROFESSOR, BRYN MAWR COLLEGE**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS,
AND RELATED PROGRAMS
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

MARCH 14, 2013

Madam Chairwoman, Congresswoman Lowey, Members of the Sub-Committee and staff: thank you for allowing me to present this statement on behalf of the American Councils for International Education. I am requesting that the Subcommittee recommend funding in the fiscal year 2014 State, Foreign Operations bill at least at the level requested by the Administration in fiscal year 2013 for programs under the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and in support of continued assistance for East Europe and Eurasia, including assistance models in the educational sector that are making a major difference for a new generation of leaders in that part of the world.

My name is Dan E. Davidson and I have worked in Russia, East Europe and Eurasia as a scholar, teacher, and director of several major assistance initiatives for nearly 40 years. I am president of American Councils for International Education, a nonprofit organization that works in the republics of the former Soviet Union, East Europe, Afghanistan, China, Africa and the Middle East. Founded in 1974, American Councils is one of the leading and best-known U.S. organizations administering U.S. Government, World Bank, foreign government, and privately funded exchange and educational development programs.

SUPPORTING DEMOCRATIC ENGAGEMENT

Congress has played a vital role in defining our national goals in the emerging democracies of East Europe, Eurasia, Afghanistan, and, more recently, in the Middle East and Asia. It did so for example, by enacting the FREEDOM Support (FSA), the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Acts, and through well -coordinated exchange and development programs, modeled on FSA for the Arab-Muslim world, such as Kennedy/Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program.

The National Security Language Initiative of 2006 (DOS: NSLI-y , CLS, and two closely related teacher programs, TCLP and ISLI) supports overseas immersion training for US school and university students in critical languages through person-to-person, school- and university-based linkages between the US and Bangladesh, China, Central Asia, Egypt, Jordan, Korea, Oman, Morocco, India, Indonesia, Russia, and Turkey, focused on helping US and overseas participants

develop deep knowledge of our respective languages, cultures, legal and economic systems. This Subcommittee, in particular, deserves credit for embracing these activities.

Your continued support of regionally focused programs ensures that US business, government, and humanitarian engagement of *strategic* partner nations around the world will be well-informed concerning the historical and political cultures in which they operate, and hence able to forge long-term cooperative relationships based on mutual benefit and trust.

I would particularly like to thank this Subcommittee for its continued support of the Department of State's Title VIII, Research and Training for Eastern Europe and the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union Program. American Councils is among the administering organizations for this program. Title VIII remains critical to our national security interests, by fostering trans-national relationships in research, on-site field work, and advanced training in areas essential for US policy formation and analysis.

There is particular need today for international exchange and training programs focused on professional development, the support of teachers and those who train them, such as the Junior Faculty Development Program (JFDP), TCLP, ISLI and Educational Seminars. These programs are inexpensive but particularly important, as one teacher can have an impact on hundreds or thousands of students.

New national testing systems improve educational policy formation and contribute greatly to the elimination of corrupt practices surrounding university admissions in many of these nations, as US Assistance for university admissions testing in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Ukraine over the past decade are demonstrating.

Participation in these U.S. educational exchanges is truly competitive and merit-based. In 2012, more than 45,000 ninth and tenth-graders across Eurasia applied for 820 positions available in the FLEX Program alone. The FLEX and YES programs has come to serve as highly visible working models for transparency, inclusion, and acceptance of ethnic diversity and physical challenges for access to educational opportunity in countries where such opportunities were available only through patronage and political connection. In that respect, they represent American values and ideals in action, rather than as words on a page. Moreover, exchange alumni in the home countries take on increasingly important roles in government, the private sector and the NGO community.

For that reason, Madam Chairwoman, I ask that the Subcommittee include language in support of these programs.

Thank you very much for providing me with this opportunity to present my views to the Subcommittee.