



For Immediate Release

Contacts: Michelle Nicholson
mnicholson@partners.net
(202) 637-6215

Rebecca Morgan
rebeccam@nafsa.org
(202) 495-2553

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Institutions of Higher Education Win *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Funding for Study Abroad with Support from ExxonMobil

WASHINGTON, DC: December 15, 2015. The White House, U.S. Department of State, Partners of the Americas, and NAFSA: Association of International Educators announced nine new 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund grants sponsored by ExxonMobil to support university partnerships and new study abroad programs at an event with Vice President Joe Biden.

“We have to invest in the greatest natural resource we all have – in our people...this investment in our young minds is critically important,” Vice President Biden stated at the event. “It rests on exposure... exposure to culture, language, and politics of other countries. That’s how we’re going to build the closest ties that will cement the economic growth and stability of this hemisphere.”

The goal of 100,000 Strong in the Americas, President Obama’s signature education initiative in the Western Hemisphere, is to increase the number of U.S. students studying in the Western Hemisphere to 100,000, and the number of Western Hemisphere students studying in the United States to 100,000 by the year 2020. The initiative is aimed at enhancing hemispheric competitiveness, increasing prosperity, and preparing a more globally competent workforce.

The objective of the current competition, generously supported by ExxonMobil, is to increase study abroad in engineering, physics, geology, and geophysics. The winning higher education institutions submitted innovative proposals that will create new or build on existing partnerships that increase study abroad opportunities for STEM students, especially those in the eligible academic fields of study from six countries. The competition was open to institutions in the U.S., Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guyana, and Mexico.

“Although the 2015 [Open Doors Report on International Education and Exchange](#) revealed the Americas as the fastest growing region of the world for study abroad, it also shows that the number of student exchanges in the STEM fields must grow substantially,” said Steve Vetter, President and CEO of Partners of the Americas. “Employers including this round’s supporter, ExxonMobil, tell us they want many more bilingual, globally savvy staff from the field to their corporate offices. The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund is working hard and effectively to achieve this goal.”

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The Innovation Fund awards promote transnational institutional partnerships rather than direct scholarships. The announced awards are up to \$25,000 each and will leverage commitments from the selected universities to increase student mobility, address institutional barriers that prevent STEM students from studying abroad, and promote study abroad in engineering, physics, geology, and geophysics in the Western Hemisphere. It is expected that approximately 132 students will study abroad as a result of the nine grants awarded.

The Innovation Fund grants were awarded to:

California State University, Fullerton, California, U.S.

Partner: Universidade Estadual Paulista “Júlio de Mesquita Filho,” Campus de Sorocaba, Sorocaba, Brazil

Project Title: “Bilateral Exchange for Engineering Students”

The goal of California State University, Fullerton’s experiential STEM-focused international mobility program is to provide engineering students with high impact learning opportunities designed to improve the skills needed to succeed as professionals in an increasingly diverse and international workplace. The program will increase institutional capacity for CSU Fullerton and UNESP Sorocaba to support U.S./Brazil mobility by establishing a new partnership; creating study abroad opportunities for students; increasing staff experience; and developing a culture of international, Brazil-based bilateral exchange.

Clemson University, South Carolina, U.S.

Partner: Tecnológico de Monterrey, Monterrey, México

Project Title: “Promoting Cross-Cultural Physics and Engineering Teams for Today’s Operational Challenges”

Clemson University and its partner Tecnológico de Monterrey propose a program that focuses on developing the capabilities of students to work collaboratively in multidisciplinary, cross-cultural teams. Some of the main innovations in the proposed program include the creation of student bi-national teams that will collaborate on joint projects that provide solutions to real-world problems posed by industry partners; travel of the student teams to both locations in order to allow students to act both as hosts and visitors and educate their peers in the local culture, habits, and expectations; and the bringing together of academic and industrial partners to promote economic impact.

Purdue University, Indiana, U.S.

Partners: Universidad EAFIT, Medellín, Colombia; Universidad del Norte, Barranquilla, Colombia

Project Title: “Purdue-Colombia Partnership for Scaling Inclusive, Sustainable, and Transformative Engineering Study Abroad Experiences”

Purdue University proposes an integrated plan of investment, cooperation, and assessment to increase the annual number of Purdue engineering students who undertake semester or longer experiences in Latin America, and particularly in Colombia. The Purdue-Colombia partnership will address the special

needs of minority engineering students and increase the number of internship and research opportunities that can help transform their study abroad experiences. Through the Innovation Fund grant, Purdue will build on its strategic strengths and use the synergy and network of connections in Colombia as a launching pad to scale up inclusive, sustainable, and transformative study abroad experiences for both U.S. and Colombian students in the partnership.

The University of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.

Partner: Universidade Tiradentes, Sergipe, Brazil

Project Title: “The Comparative Coastal Systems of Sergipe, Brazil and Massachusetts, USA”

The University of Massachusetts, Boston (UMB) and the Universidade Tiradentes (UniT) are ideal academic partners, located in state capital cities, in coastal zones, and have expertise in the earth sciences, which led to a formal agreement that also established the Tiradentes Institute on the UMB campus. The goal of the Comparative Coastal Systems project is to increase student understanding of the development and evolution of coastal systems through an immersive, research-based, collaborative, educational experience comparing the Brazilian and U.S. coasts. To that end, the program will foster deeper connections between UMB and UniT faculty and students, as well as provide students with diverse cross-cultural experiences.

The University of Texas at Austin, Texas, U.S.

Partner: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, Mexico

Project Title: “Promoting Study Abroad in Geophysics: Applying Intelligent Systems to Geoscience Problems (IS-GEO)”

The University of Texas at Austin and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México designed a new and innovative exchange program model that aims to address one of the key challenges to student mobility: attracting STEM students to study abroad opportunities. The Intelligent Systems to Geoscience Problems (IS-GEO) project will increase the number of students engaged in joint IS-GEO research by initiating cross-border interdisciplinary collaborations between the U.S. and Mexico. Students will participate in a course that will provide a model for other STEM departments, helping other institutions overcome barriers for incorporating international exchange into existing curricula.

The University of Texas at El Paso, Texas, U.S.

Partner: Universidad de Guadalajara, México

Project Title: “US-Mexico Bidirectional Study Abroad Program on Smart Cities”

Many natural and man-made disasters in recent years have demonstrated that the infrastructure of a city, such as transportation, building, energy, and communication systems, are interdependent. The University of Texas at El Paso, in partnership with Universidad de Guadalajara, developed a study abroad program that will expose students to international engineering, business, social and cultural practices in order to provide them with a clear understanding of how individual infrastructure works into a “smart city.” Through the proposed program, students will attend classes, take field trips, and carry out projects that will address current issues faced by cities undergoing a transformation into smart cities.

Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, Toluca, Mexico

Partners: University of North Texas, U.S.; Universidad Nacional de la Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Project Title: “Bridging the Americas: Promoting Global Solutions for Local Landfill Problems through Student Service and Learning”

“Bridging the Americas” will foster trilateral mobility by bringing together students from Mexico, the U.S., and Argentina to evaluate landfill pollution across the Americas and to develop policy recommendations for reducing waste and environmental contamination. This project is an interdisciplinary and multi-country initiative that promotes student service learning and local community engagement, and includes faculty mentorship from all three partnering institutions. The student research teams, which are jointly mentored by faculty from each institution, will explore best practices about waste disposal management both inside the classroom and through visits to local landfills in the respective country.

University of Guyana, Georgetown, Guyana

Partner: Texas Tech University, Texas, U.S.

Project Title: “Enhancing the Capacities of Undergraduates at the University of Guyana and Texas Tech University to Support the Oil and Gas Sector”

The University of Guyana and Texas Tech University established a study abroad program to enhance the capacities of undergraduate study with a focus on the sustainable development of the oil and gas sector. Students from both countries will study together in a course that emphasizes service learning and hands-on projects. Students will explore issues of sustainability, social justice, and transparency in the oil and gas sector as well as participate in field trips and guest lectures that address engineering ethics, resource economics, and ecological conservation.

University of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.

Partner: Universidade Federal do Paraná, Brazil

Project Title: “US-Brazil Partnership in Engineering Capstone Design”

University of Pittsburgh and Universidade Federal do Paraná’s proposed program integrates the academic strengths and existing partnership of both institutions. It centers on facilitating cross-cultural design teams for senior engineering students in order to fulfill respective senior capstone design requirements—a cornerstone of engineering education worldwide. Students will earn credit toward their degrees while learning from their peers’ diverse engineering approaches, cultural knowledge, problem-solving skills, communication styles, and more. Such an exchange aims to transform graduates of this program into appealing candidates with global skills and at the same time enhance US-Brazil engineering networks.

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The **100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund** is a public-private collaboration of the White House, U.S. Department of State, Partners of the Americas, and NAFSA: Association of International

Educators announced by Secretary of State John Kerry in January 2014. Since then, 70 Innovation Fund grants have been awarded to teams of 153 higher education institutions from 19 countries in the Western Hemisphere.

The mission of **Partners of the Americas** is to connect people and organizations across borders to serve and to change lives through lasting partnerships. These partnerships create opportunity, foster understanding, and solve real-life problems. Inspired by President Kennedy and founded in 1964 under the Alliance for Progress, Partners is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization with international offices in Washington, DC. Learn more at www.partners.net or via Twitter [@partnersamerica](https://twitter.com/partnersamerica).

With nearly 10,000 members, **NAFSA**: Association of International Educators is the world's largest nonprofit professional association dedicated to international education. Learn more at www.nafsa.org and www.connectingourworld.org and on Twitter at [@NAFSA](https://twitter.com/NAFSA) and [@ConnectOurWorld](https://twitter.com/ConnectOurWorld).

ExxonMobil is an American multinational oil and gas corporation and founding donor to the Innovation Fund. "This is a unique opportunity to expand the educational experience in regions that are strategically important to ExxonMobil as well as strengthen academic disciplines that will drive the energy industry into the future," ExxonMobil Vice President of International Government Relations Neal Goins said. "The success of this initiative will further economic development in the Americas as well as increase the potential number of qualified candidates who may wish to pursue a career in the industry."

Follow the Innovation Fund and the overall initiative on Twitter with the hashtag [#100KStrongAmericas](https://twitter.com/hashtag/100KStrongAmericas).