



Evaluation of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

January 2000



INTRODUCTION

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, a U.S. Government-sponsored international exchange program, is designed to bring accomplished professionals from designated countries to the United States at the midpoint of their careers. The U.S. Department of State (formerly the United States Information Agency) administers the Humphrey Program, assisted by the Institute of International Education (IIE). The Humphrey Program has four goals: 1) to update professional expertise and leadership skills, 2) to broaden understanding and knowledge of development issues, 3) to contribute to mutual understanding, and 4) to establish and enhance long-lasting productive partnerships. During their Humphrey year, fellows participate in academic coursework and professional development activities. Since the program began 20 years ago, over 2,500 individuals from more than 120 countries have received the highly competitive one-year fellowship.

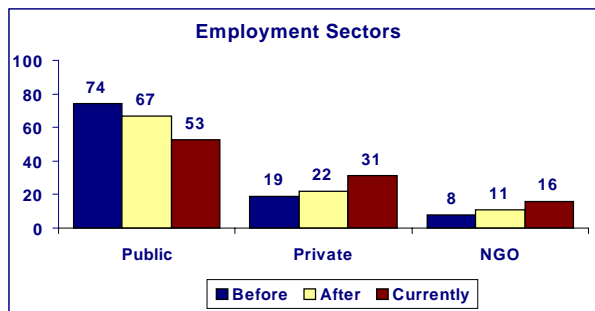
The Office of Policy and Evaluation in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs requested an evaluation of the outcomes and impacts of the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program. The Bureau contracted with Macro International Inc. (Macro) in September 1998 to 1) assess the impact of the program on the individual fellows and their home countries, and 2) develop a performance measurement system for the Humphrey Program that could also be used as a model for other academic and professional exchange programs.

Before evaluating impacts on fellows and their home countries, Macro analyzed data from the IIE database, observed the candidate selection process, interviewed program coordinators at all Humphrey universities, and visited three universities for in-depth study. Then Macro administered a survey to about 200 fellows at the Humphrey Program 20th Anniversary Conference and conducted case studies in Brazil, Ghana, Senegal, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Fellows' Employment

Prior to the fellowship, nearly three-fourths of the surveyed fellows worked in the public sector (74 percent). The public sector continues to account for the majority of fellows immediately upon their return (67 percent) and currently (53 percent), though a growing number of fellows are found in the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The proportion of fellows in the private sector grew from 19 percent before the fellowship to 22 percent immediately after to 31 percent currently. Even more striking was the doubling of the proportion of fellows in NGOs: 8 percent before the fellowship, 11 percent just after the fellowship, and 16 percent currently.



Immediately after their Humphrey Program year:

- ◆ About three of every four survey respondents (76 percent) returned to the same organization they had left.
- ◆ Only two of every five fellows (39 percent) assumed the same position.
- ◆ About two-thirds of the surveyed fellows had a post-program position with greater responsibility (69 percent) or higher status (65 percent).

Interviews with fellows uncovered great variation across countries, with Senegalese most likely to remain at the same organization and Filipinos least likely.

Readjustment Experiences

The professional transition upon return was rated “easy” by approximately half of the surveyed fellows (51 percent) and “medium” by a third (34 percent). Fellows from the later years (1990–99) were more likely than those in the earlier years to rate the transition as having been hard. The majority of interviewed fellows in all countries except Brazil described a positive readjustment. Respondents in all five countries who found their efforts impeded recalled positions having been filled in their absence, organizational cultures unresponsive to outside ideas, jealous co-workers and threatened bosses, changes in political administration (in Brazil), and a frustrating lack of resources or infrastructure (in Africa). With sensitivity to their work environments, nearly all of the fellows overcame these obstacles over time.

Implementation of New Ideas at Work

Upon return to their home country, interviewed fellows were able to implement new ideas in nearly all cases. Technology was a key focus in all countries: fellows introduced hardware and software, as well as new uses for the technology.





Important to some were ideas to make their offices function more systematically and be inclusive of a wider array of staff and stakeholders. Many introduced new programs or projects at their workplace, based on examples seen in the United States. Dissemination of ideas to others was nearly universal among fellows, via presentations, papers, and informal means.

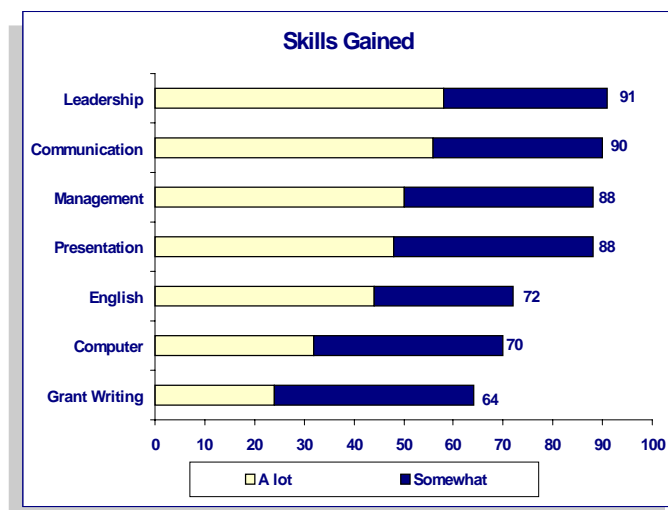
DEVELOPMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Nearly all of the survey respondents (95 percent) reported that they acquired field-specific knowledge either “a lot” (62 percent) or “somewhat” (33 percent). Gains in their knowledge of management were cited by interviewed fellows in all five countries. This finding supports the survey result that indicated that fellows in business were the most likely to say they had learned “a lot” of knowledge in their field (85 percent).

More than nine of every 10 surveyed fellows attributed to the Humphrey Program gains of “a lot” or “somewhat” in leadership skills (91 percent) and communication skills (90 percent). At least eight of every 10 fellows reported the same for management skills (88

percent) and presentation skills (88 percent). At least seven of every 10 fellows rated their English skills (72 percent) and computer skills (70 percent) similarly. Sixty-four percent did so for grant or proposal writing.

Interviewed fellows in all countries reported that their computer skills were greatly enhanced. Leadership, management, and communication skills were also cited frequently by interviewed fellows as having improved through the Humphrey Program.



CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS AND OTHER FELLOWS

Nearly all surveyed fellows (94 percent) maintain contact with people they met in the United States, as do interviewed fellows in the African countries. About four-fifths of the Brazilians and the Filipinos and half of the Malaysians also maintain such contacts. Nearly all of the Asians and the Senegalese maintain contact with other fellows, as do most Ghanaians and Brazilians.

Four of every five surveyed fellows (81 percent) maintain both professional and personal contacts. Yet these contacts occur only once a year (30 percent) or four times a year (32 percent). Interviewed fellows in all countries confirmed that communication was infrequent and difficult to sustain.

Interviewed fellows reported a wealth of results from their contacts. Their contacts enabled the fellows to exchange information, independently or jointly write papers and develop proposals, initiate regional or international collaborations, carry out community service projects, conduct business, and develop additional contacts. Alumni associations, at varying degrees of activity, have promoted efforts to strengthen their communities through fellows’ combined efforts.



UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNITED STATES AND AMERICANS

Fellows developed an increased understanding of Americans by participating in many facets of Americans' lives, such as becoming involved with their children's schools, attending religious services, engaging in everyday contact with Americans, and attending cultural events. Host families were often critical for exposing fellows to American systems, traditions, families, and informal life. Key American values and traits noted by interviewed fellows in all countries were respect for and equality of all individuals, a focus on time and results, and the warmth and honesty of Americans.

Nearly every surveyed fellow (98 percent) reported having learned "a lot" or "somewhat" about U.S. practices and cultures, and almost as many (94 percent) indicated the same about U.S. government and policies. Interviewed fellows were most impressed with the American education system. Brazilian fellows also praised the activeness of Americans in local politics and the extent to which Americans volunteer.

Surveyed fellows reported that the Humphrey Program had a great impact upon them personally. Almost all fellows said the program increased "a lot" or "somewhat":

- ◆ motivation and ambition (97 percent)
- ◆ interest in world issues and cultural tolerance (96 percent for each)
- ◆ self-confidence (92 percent)
- ◆ independence (89 percent).

Interviewed fellows were similarly positive about their personal development. Some described their Humphrey Program year as a "life changing" event.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Maintaining friendships was the accomplishment surveyed fellows were most likely to report as a result of interactions with U.S. contacts (93 percent). Two-thirds of the fellows said the interactions enabled them to stay up to date on information in their field (68 percent) and to implement new approaches in their work (67 percent). For interviewed fellows, the single most significant accomplishment from the Humphrey Program ranged from new approaches and new programs they implemented or managed, to changes in motivating factors, to increased motivation and confidence.

CONCLUSION

Fellows conveyed an enthusiasm for and belief in the Humphrey Program and its impacts even as many as 20 years later. Virtually all of the 110 fellows interviewed exhibited determination to make a difference and confidence that they would overcome obstacles. Fellows returning to regions and countries with the greatest needs often (though not always) experienced environments more conducive to their having an impact, perhaps because their skills and knowledge were in such demand. In a few cases, receptive environments were created by other Humphrey fellows present in the same place of work. Fellows reinforced their own abilities to achieve results by entering their Humphrey year with a concrete plan (even as they remained open to unanticipated areas of learning), maintaining contact with their offices while away, and forming strong networks with Americans that could serve as resources upon the fellows' return to their home countries.