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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



HIGHER EDUCATION: A GLOBAL IMPERATIVE

U.S. University Delegation On International Education / Latin America

August 8, 2007

"International students are a huge asset for U.S. higher education.... We want these students, we welcome these students, and we need these students."

-- Secretary Margaret Spellings (*Financial Times*)

The United States strongly believes in the promise of higher education, and welcomes students from around the world to study at our colleges and universities. Foreign student enrollment continues to rise in the post-9/11 era, up more than 17 percent since the 1999-2000 school year. U.S. institutions of higher education remain a prime destination for young men and women seeking to succeed in the highly competitive global economy.

U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings will travel to Latin America with a Delegation of American university presidents to follow up on the commitment of the U.S. University Presidents Summit on International Education. The Delegation's focus is on higher education, whose importance to our shared future has never been greater. A similar delegation led by Secretary Spellings traveled to Asia last November, and earlier this year in March, Ambassador Karen Hughes took a delegation to India.

While in Latin America, the Delegation will highlight the need for universities to produce the talented workers of tomorrow, and the critical role businesses play in fostering partnerships among universities. Business leaders are united in calling for graduates who are knowledgeable in math and science and fluent in today's technology. Secretary Spellings and her Delegation will address business, university, and student audiences in Chile and Brazil to discuss ways to ensure young people have the knowledge and skills to seize economic opportunities. They will also discuss U.S. efforts to streamline and strengthen the visa process for students from other nations wishing to study in America.

Latin America Delegation Members include: President James B. Milliken (University of Nebraska), President Eduardo J. Padron (Miami Dade College), Chancellor Sean O'Keefe (Louisiana State University), President John Hennessy (Stanford University), Chancellor Henry Tzu-Yow Yang (University of California, Santa Barbara), President Susan C. Aldridge (University of Maryland, University College), Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton (Washington University in St. Louis), and President Geoffrey Gregory (Iowa State University).

Secretary Spellings is committed to a higher education system as innovative as the world it serves. She proposed an Action Plan for Higher Education to improve its accessibility, affordability, and accountability. She worked with President Bush and Congress to implement millions of dollars in grants for low-income students in math, science, engineering and critical-need foreign language majors. And the *No Child Left Behind Act* continues to promote high standards and accountability in K-12 schools so graduates are prepared for college.

International Education Program

The U.S. Department of Education has increased funding for its **International Education Program** by 36 percent since 2001, to \$106 million in FY 2006. Part of this funding supports more than 120 **National Resource Centers** focused on language and world areas studies: 18 in Latin America, 17 in East Asia, 17 in the Middle East, 16 in Russia and Eastern Europe, 11 in Africa, nine in South Asia, and seven in Southeast Asia.

Streamlining and Strengthening the Student Visa Process

President Bush has said, "We want young people from around the world coming to our universities." The U.S. Department of Education is working with the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that students from around the world continue to study at American universities and colleges:

- The number of student and exchange visas issued last year reached an all-time high of 591,050 – a global increase of nearly 14 percent.
- Ninety-seven percent of qualified applicants receive their visas in 1-2 days, according to the Department of State.
- As part of the Rice/Chertoff Joint Vision, students can now apply for visas 120 days before their studies begin.
- The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System [SEVIS] enables colleges and exchange programs in the U.S. to host more than 800,000 foreign students and visitors while preventing abuses of the system.