

**William B. DeLauder
President Emeritus
Delaware State University and
Senior Counselor to the President
NASULGC, A Public University Association**

**Comments on
“Restoring America’s Leadership through Scholarships for
Undergraduates from Developing Countries: The Uniting Students in
America (USA) Proposal”**

**June 19, 2008
9:00 A.M.**

**House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and
Oversight**

And

**House Committee on Education and Labor
Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning,
Competitiveness**

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the subcommittees, thank you for inviting me to present my views on the “Restoring America’s Leadership through Scholarships for Undergraduates from Developing Countries: Uniting Students in America (USA) Proposal” and on the role that scholarships for undergraduate study in America for needy students from developing countries might play in promoting the interests of both the United States and developing countries.

I commend the Chairman and others involved for bringing forth this USA proposal.

I believe that there is a broad consensus around the country that student mobility contributes greatly to fostering goodwill and better understandings between nations. Some have called this a form of educational diplomacy. To be effective it must occur both ways – i.e., more American students studying abroad and more international students studying in this country.

As stated in the Report of the NASULGC Task Force on International Education, “The goodwill and strong personal ties to this nation built through generations of students coming to our colleges and universities from around the world are important underpinnings of U.S. foreign relations.”¹ Former Secretary of State Colin Powell expressed it this way: “International students and scholars enrich our communities with their academic abilities and cultural diversity and they return home with an increased understanding and often a lasting affection for the United States. I can think of no more valuable asset to our country than the friendship of future world leaders who have been educated here.”

On several occasions, President Bush has expressed his commitment to student exchange programs. On November 13, 2001, President George W. Bush said: “We must ...reaffirm our commitment to promote educational opportunities that enable American students to study abroad, and to encourage international students to take part in our educational system.”

¹ Report of the NASULGC Task Force on International Education, October 2004.

According to the Open Doors 2007 Report of the Institute of International Education (IIE), 223,534 American college students studied abroad in 2005-06.² This represents less than 2 percent of the total enrollment in our colleges and universities. There are a variety of reasons why many college students don't study abroad, but lack of finances is one of the major challenges.³ That is why the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Foundation Act (H.R. 1469), that awaits action by the full Senate, is so important. The implementation of the Simon Act, which follows the recommendations of the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, will both increase the number of American college students studying abroad and increase the diversity of students studying abroad. Thus other countries will see and experience the diversity of the American people. Most of U.S. higher education considers the Simon Bill a top priority.

The USA Program addresses the need to increase the number of international undergraduate students studying in the United States. The focus on needy students from developing countries is noteworthy because that is where, I believe, we have the greatest misunderstandings, i.e., between the American people and people from developing countries.

The Simon Bill and the USA Program complement each other. The Simon Bill opens up study abroad opportunities for American students who may not otherwise be able to afford to study abroad. The USA Program will open up doors for needy students from developing countries who may not otherwise have an opportunity to obtain both an international experience and a college degree. The USA Program also serves a development purpose because many developing countries lack the capacity to accommodate all highly qualified students who seek a college degree. For example, in SubSaharian Africa, many universities are overenrolled, understaffed, and under-funded. In an attempt to meet some of the growing demand for higher education, education quality has been greatly diminished.

Our colleges and universities are both committed to increasing the number of U.S. students studying abroad and to increasing the number of international students who study in their colleges or universities. The latter point is supported by the current Open Door's data on international students.

² Open Doors Report 2007, published by the Institute of International Education (IIE).

³ Global Competence & National Needs: One Million Americans Studying Abroad, the final report of the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, November 2005.

The Open Doors Report 2007 indicates that 582,984 international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities in the 2006-07 academic year. According to the report, 40.1 percent of the students were enrolled in undergraduate programs and 45.7 percent were enrolled in graduate programs. The leading place of origin of international students in the U.S. was Asia with 344,495. The numbers of international students from Latin American, Africa, the Middle East, Central America & Mexico were 64,579; 35,802; 22,321; and 19,743, respectively.⁴

To be effective, students who participate in the USA Program must return to their home country in order to spread goodwill and to pursue their careers with a better understanding of the United States. There is data that shows in past U.S. sponsored programs that targeted graduate students, a high percentage of students returned to home country. I, however, have been unable to find similar data for undergraduate students.

There are some technical issues that will need to be addressed in the USA Program as proposed. I will point out two:

- (1) At most 4-year institutions, the single payment of \$30,000 per student will not be sufficient to cover all of the expenses proposed, i.e. room and board, travel, books, pocket money, etc. This will mean that the institution will need to cover the balance of the cost. This will be a problem for some institutions, including historically Black institutions and other small institutions.
- (2) It is not clear whether the proposed program includes attendance at either a 2-year or 4-year institution. On this issue, there are inconsistencies within the proposal that should be addressed.

I would like to point out that development activities also support a better understanding between the partner countries and also address a need within the developing country. There is a great need among African countries, in particular, to have more persons trained at the graduate level. Many African universities have severe faculty shortages and in many cases have a need for more faculty educated at the doctoral level. You may wish to consider including some fellowships at the graduate level along with the undergraduate fellowships.

⁴ Open Doors Report 2007, published by the Institute of International Education (IIE).

In conclusion, student mobility has proven to be an excellent way in which to foster goodwill and understandings between countries. The USA Program therefore should contribute to improving the image of the United States abroad and thereby improve our diplomacy abroad. As several studies have shown, our image around the world is badly tarnished. International students who study in one of our colleges or universities will have an opportunity to meet and talk with American students and others from diverse backgrounds, to experience the diverse American culture, to learn about American democracy, to learn about American institutions, and to obtain a valuable undergraduate education that will be a strong asset in their life pursuits. Many of these students are expected to become future leaders within their respective countries. They will bring with this new responsibility a better understanding of the United States that should enhance their countries' relationships with the United States.

The USA Program is an important program and wish for you success in moving this program forward.

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to appear before these distinguished subcommittees.