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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **U.S. AND SOUTH AFRICA CREATE FULBRIGHT COMMISSION TO PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES AND STRENGTHEN MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING**

Vice President Al Gore and South African Deputy President Thabo Mbeki signed an agreement in Capetown, South Africa, Feb. 17, establishing a binational Fulbright Commission to expand academic and professional exchanges between their two countries. The Commission will be governed by a Board consisting of an equal number of citizens of the United States and citizens of South Africa. The Commission office will be in South Africa.

The agreement aims to continue the large number and variety of educational and professional exchanges already carried out between the countries and to develop a specific program with the principal objective to encourage greater mutual understanding between the peoples of the Republic of South Africa and of the United States. The agreement calls for financial contributions to the program from both governments and for the new Commission to engage in private sector fund raising.

The Fulbright Program, which is sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), functioned on a limited scale between the two countries from 1952 to 1994. Administered by USIA staff in the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, the Fulbright Program primarily has involved South Africans coming to the United States to study and engage in research. Since South Africa's historic 1994 elections, academic exchanges among Americans and South Africans have increased greatly.

Seventy-eight U.S. and South African students and senior scholars taught and studied in each other's country through the Fulbright Program in 1995. In addition, USIA has funded an annual summer institute for South African teachers of English and teacher trainers through the Fulbright Program for the past 10 years.

The United States exchanges students, scholars, teachers and other professionals with 140 other countries through the Fulbright Program, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1996. Since 1946, more than 210,000 people -- over 70,000 Americans and 130,000 people from other countries -- have participated in the Fulbright Program.

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The United States Information Agency, headed by Dr. Joseph Duffey, is an independent foreign affairs agency within the executive branch that explains and supports U.S. foreign policy and national security interests abroad through a wide range of information programs. The agency promotes mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through a series of educational and cultural exchange activities conducted by its Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

USIA's educational and cultural programs include the Fulbright academic program, the International Visitor Program, the Citizen Exchanges program, arts programs, book translations, and English teaching.

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