

**Statement Prepared for a Hearing Before the  
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District  
of Columbia**

**U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

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This Subcommittee periodically focuses on a subject we would all rather forget. Foreign language study in our nation today is at its lowest level in history. In part, this has happened because English is becoming the world's lingua franca in science and much of higher education. Nevertheless, our nation needs – perhaps more than ever – a corps of people who serve in official capacities that can speak other languages. So I thank the Subcommittee for holding this and other hearings on our national skills deficit and for giving me the chance to offer a perspective on what we can do to move the needle to where it should be.

The Institute of International Education, which I represent, is an independent not-for-profit organization founded in 1919, and we are privileged to assist the federal government in administering key academic exchange and public diplomacy initiatives such as the David Boren scholarships and fellowships, the Benjamin Gilman scholarships, and the nation's flagship Fulbright Program to which over 100 other governments also contribute. I have been invited to testify because of the Institute's history and role in these programs and based on my participation on a Council on Foreign Relations Task Force that convened throughout 2011 and which recently published a report entitled "US Education Reform and National Security." The chairs of the Task Force were Joel Klein, former Chancellor of the New York

City Department of Education, and Condoleezza Rice, the former Secretary of State. While the Report focuses on K-12 education, it has profound implications for higher educational institutions, too, as they prepare our next generation for global citizenship and work in an intercultural world.

For the United States, knowledge of foreign languages and cultures is essential to our national security and to preparing Americans to meet the demands of the global workforce. The Task Force reached a strong consensus that our young people “must master essential reading, writing, math, and science skills, acquire foreign languages, learn about the world, and—importantly—understand America’s core institutions and values in order to be engaged in the community and in the international system.” And the Report issued an emphatic warning that “educational failure puts the United States’ future prosperity, global position and physical safety at risk.” To me, its most important recommendation is the call for a national security “readiness audit” to determine on a nation-wide basis how many students are mastering “important national security skills, such as learning foreign languages . . . .” Such an audit would help us all to achieve the better coordination among federal, state, and local governments, the private sector, and academia in addressing the gaps about which this Subcommittee has been so persistently and correctly concerned.

Of particular relevance to this hearing, the Task Force concluded that “the United States must produce enough citizens with critical skills to fill the ranks of the Foreign Service, the intelligence community, and the armed forces. For the United States to maintain its military and diplomatic leadership role, it needs highly qualified and capable men and women to conduct its foreign affairs.” The pipeline for this is not currently being filled by the skills taught in our nation’s K-12 schools, and our higher education system is not yet committed to making up the deficits. That is why it is very important to support efficient and effective higher education initiatives that are strategically targeted to build these capacities. And, indeed, the Federal Government currently provides a number of programs that are making a difference both in

terms of the number of young Americans who are getting the language training and area studies expertise needed for government service. But we do have a very long way to go and the government alone cannot close the gaps that have troubled this Subcommittee.

In my view, higher education institutions should reinstitute foreign language proficiency as a graduation requirement. A hundred years ago this was, in fact, the case for virtually all our colleges and universities. Today, this is true literally for just a handful. And we also need to do much better at encouraging those of our students with real aptitude for critical languages to extend and deepen their studies and skills.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, there were only 121 Bachelor's degrees in Arabic language awarded by US colleges and universities in 2009/10, the most recent year for which data is available. There were 456 Bachelor's awarded in Chinese and just 356 in Russian. That same year, by comparison, there were nearly 92,000 Bachelor's degrees awarded in visual and performing arts. While more American students are studying overseas than ever before, the total is still less than 2% of all the 20 million enrolled in U.S. higher education in any given year, and the majority of those students are studying abroad in Western Europe and only for short periods that are not conducive to significant language gains.

The Federal programs represented at this Hearing are very strategic government investments in international education and academic exchanges that are working to counter these trends. Without these programs and their global focus and networks, the reality is that most of our young Americans in higher education today would end up studying abroad in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia and New Zealand and mostly in summer.

The National Security Education Program's Boren Scholarships and Fellowships provide funding for study abroad that focuses exclusively on parts of the world where most Americans do not go. More than

80% of Boren Scholars and Fellows study overseas for a full academic year. As NSEP initiatives, the Boren Awards focus on countries, languages, and fields critical to U.S. national security, recognizing a broad definition that includes traditional concerns of protecting American well-being, as well as challenges of global society, such as sustainable development, environmental issues, disease, migration, and economic competitiveness. Boren Scholars and Fellows represent a vital pool of highly motivated individuals who wish to work in the federal national security arena. In exchange for scholarship and fellowship funding, Boren Award recipients commit to working in the federal government for at least one year after graduation.

Also under the auspices of the National Security Education Program, The Language Flagship is creating an entirely new approach to language learning, building an innovative partnership among the federal government, education, and business to produce global professionals with a superior proficiency in critical languages. Programs include rigorous language study at home, content courses taught in the target language, and an articulated program of at least 1 year overseas that includes an internship and/or community service experience, designed to ensure that the student can negotiate academic and workplace culture, and solidify professional level language skills. Dr. Laura Junor, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness, who oversees these programs, will describe them in greater detail in her testimony to this committee.

The State Department's educational and cultural exchanges, notably the Fulbright and Gilman Programs and Critical Language Scholarships, emphasize leadership skills, cultural competence and language learning. These programs are managed by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Each year, more than 1,700 of our brightest students, young professionals and future leaders from increasingly diverse backgrounds go abroad through the Fulbright U.S. Student Program for study and

professional development and to serve as English teaching assistants, many in underserved regions and schools. Applications for the U.S. Student Fulbright Program are at an all-time high. Through a multi-faceted and vigorous outreach effort, we have expanded participation by African-, Hispanic- and Native-American students and the public, private, large, and small colleges and universities where they study. The Critical Language Enhancement Awards element of the Fulbright Program provides 3-6 months of intensive language study in host countries for U.S. Fulbright students prior to and concurrent with their Fulbright awards. Emphasis is on gaining proficiency in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Russian, Turkish and the Indic languages.

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program (a component of the Foreign Student Program) helps U.S. students learn and reach proficiency in critical languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Hausa, Kiswahili, Pashto, Persian, and Turkish by bringing to U.S. campuses recent graduates from abroad who serve as teaching assistants and cultural ambassadors. This year, over 250 U.S. institutions, including historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and community colleges, are hosting FLTA's and over 12,000 American undergraduates are being taught. U.S. colleges and high schools also receive Fulbright teaching assistants in more commonly taught languages (French, Spanish, and German) who enrich the classroom as native speakers and share their cultures.

An additional activity of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the Critical Language Scholarship Program, which provides awards to U.S. undergraduate and graduate students for intensive summer study of important world languages. In summer 2012, over 600 students will study 13 languages at these intensive summer institutes abroad. Similarly, ECA supports language study abroad by more than 600 high school students each year through its National Security Language Program for Youth – NSLI-Y.

The goal of the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, also sponsored by ECA, is to diversify the kinds of U.S. students who study abroad and the countries and regions where they go. This program, which currently provides 2,300 grants each year, was created to reach students at the undergraduate level who are talented and ready for an international experience but who cannot undertake such an experience without financial assistance. Eligibility requires students to be recipients of U.S. federal financial aid. Selection criteria focus on academic merit, destination of study (with preference toward non-traditional destinations and languages), and student diversity. To reach a diverse applicant pool, we together with the State Department have developed a robust and integrated outreach approach. This year, 54% of all Gilman recipients are from underrepresented ethnic minorities, compared to 21% of the U.S. study abroad population. More than half of the Gilman alumni were the first in their families to go to college. Gilman alumni have successfully competed for Fulbright and Boren Scholarships to continue to develop their cultural and linguistic abilities.

All these programs address different elements of preparing the next generation of citizens to address our national security needs. Many graduates from these programs are serving in the federal government in a variety of critical capacities, including offices as varied as the Foreign Service, NASA, the International Trade Administration, the military, and the intelligence community. Therefore, I want to thank the Subcommittee and the other members of the Senate and the House for establishing such programs and for their consistent support in sustaining them over the years.

America's foremost cultural historian, Jacques Barzun, noted in his landmark study 'From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life' that "It is a noteworthy feature of 20<sup>th</sup> century culture that for the first time in over a thousand years its educated class is not expected to be at least bilingual." Not to try to correct this deficit in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be a costly mistake. Learning and using

another's language teaches that we cannot solve world problems on our own no matter how many Chinese and Indians speak English. Languages convey more than facts; they enable people to reach conclusions in different ways and are the standard bearers of cultures from which we can also learn. It has never been more important for more Americans to know that, especially as they prepare for and enter careers of service to the nation and in departments and agencies that all aim at making the world we share a less dangerous place.

Thank you.