

# COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

*Promoting U.S. Global Competence*

## U.S. GLOBAL COMPETENCE: THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

### *A BRIEFING PAPER*

Today, the U.S. faces an urgent education issue that will directly affect our nation's well being for generations to come: the ***global competence***<sup>1</sup> of Americans. Ensuring the nation's security, economic competitiveness, foreign policy leadership, and ability to understand and meet global challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century depends on U.S. global competence. However, a March 2007 National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report warned: "***A pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages in this country threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce an informed citizenry.***" This briefing paper focuses on the role of the U.S. Department of Education's international and foreign language education programs—the Higher Education Act-Title VI, Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6) and K-12 foreign language programs—as important vehicles for addressing this education goal.

### **Why the Federal Role is Critical**

**The federal government has long played a critical role in international and foreign language education.** This role stems from the clear relevance of global competence to the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, the national security of the U.S., global economic competitiveness, and not the least of which, the global challenges permeating the U.S. workforce today, whether at home and abroad. Informed decisions in these areas depend on Americans who have the necessary skills and understanding of foreign languages, cultures and systems. In short, it is a federal interest to ensure that Americans are successfully prepared to engage with other cultures and languages in today's interconnected world.

Through the U.S. Department of Education's Title VI, Fulbright-Hays and K-12 FLAP programs, **the federal government carries out a catalytic function in partnership with institutions of higher education, and state and local school districts that stimulates support for international and foreign language education programs.** State and local governments and the private sector, including foundations, will not by themselves focus on long-term national needs for international expertise. While these sectors support short-term projects from time to time, they do not provide the long-term, sustained support for the decade-long study and research needed to produce an expert on the Middle East highly proficient in Arabic, for example.

The 2007 NAS report on Title VI and Fulbright-Hays stated, "***Universities themselves have invested significant resources beyond those provided by the Department of Education.***" However, colleges and universities cannot bear this responsibility alone. Outside resources are the lynchpin for developing and sustaining high cost programs in the less commonly taught

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<sup>1</sup> The components of what we call "global competence" range from deep expertise in the languages and cultures of other nations and regions, to basic understanding of the rest of the world and the U.S. role. Global competencies involve, among other things, having cross-cultural skills, foreign language proficiency and the ability to function effectively in other legal, political, economic, social and cultural environments and value systems.

languages and world regions, providing fellowships to undergraduate and graduate students, and conducting extensive educational outreach and collaboration between and among education institutions, government agencies, and businesses. **Most of these programs would not exist without federal support, especially at a time when state and local governments, and institutions of higher education also are financially strapped.**

Department of Education international education programs therefore ensure the federal education goals of *access to and delivery of* international and foreign language studies critical to the national interest. Based on standards of excellence, Title VI fellowships and education abroad opportunities encourage both *accessibility* for deserving students and *completion* of their studies.

### **HEA-Title VI and Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6)**

At the height of the Cold War, Congress created Title VI in the National Defense Education Act of 1958, and Section 102(b)(6) of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961 (popularly known as Fulbright-Hays) out of a sense of crisis about U.S. lack of knowledge on other countries, their languages and cultures. These world-class programs remain the federal government's most comprehensive investment in the development of high quality *national capacity* in international, foreign language and global business education and research. Unlike other federal agency programs supporting foreign language training, Title VI and Fulbright-Hays are foundational programs, supporting education and research in a wide variety of world areas, disciplines and languages (over 200) and at all levels of education, thus ensuring the nation's capacity to respond to new and unanticipated global challenges.

Title VI programs have adapted and improved over time in response to expanding needs for international expertise and workforce skills. Programs and provisions were added to internationalize business education and other professions, infuse language and regional studies into undergraduate education, improve research on teaching and learning foreign languages, increase underrepresented populations in international service, support overseas research centers, and so on. Today, the impact of globalization, changing world conditions and U.S. demographics are increasing demands for globally competent Americans in nearly all employment sectors, at home and abroad. The suite of Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs support activities to improve our nation's international education capabilities throughout the pipeline, from K-12 outreach through graduate level education and advanced research, with strategic emphasis on the less commonly taught languages and regions of the world. For example, they provide the major source of **deep expertise and research on non-European countries and their languages**. Title VI largely supports the domestic side of training and research, while Fulbright-Hays supports an essential overseas component.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Congress significantly enhanced these programs to increase the education capacity and the number of Americans trained in strategic foreign languages and targeted world areas of national need, such as Central and South Asia, the Middle East, Russia, and the Independent States of the former Soviet Union. Between FY 2000 - 2008, foreign language training capacity and the number of Title VI Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) fellowships for these world areas nearly doubled. In some of the most critical languages, enrollments increased threefold. Regrettably, the recent budget reductions have pushed back Title VI/Fulbright funding to pre-September 11, 2001 levels in current dollars, putting this strengthened international education capacity at risk.

Other federal programs with more targeted priorities, such as those at the Departments of Defense,

Commerce and State, are complementary to Title VI/Fulbright-Hays and depend on their educational infrastructure and resources. Title VI grantees also are relied upon for their expertise by federal and state agencies, corporations, state and local school districts, as well as other institutions of higher education. They provide access to international knowledge and expertise for educators, government and business officials, and the public through degree programs, web resources, training, conferences and other means. Examples include,

- The U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program sends its officers to Title VI National Resource Centers for their M.A. in language and area studies training and has done so since the inception of the FAO program three decades ago.
- The Defense Language Institute uses materials for training of teachers of Chinese, Korean and Persian that were developed by a Title VI Language Resource Center.
- The U.S. Department of Commerce and the local District Export Councils work closely with Title VI Centers for International Business Education and Research on export development. Centers provide training and expertise to enable small and mid-sized U.S. business to increase exports, thereby supporting job creation in America and reduction of the U.S. trade deficit.
- Title VI center grantees work extensively with community colleges, minority serving institutions of higher education, small 4-year colleges and K-12 schools across the nation to enhance foreign language teaching capacity, and develop curriculum on language, world areas, regional affairs and international business.

The Title VI/Fulbright-Hays federal-university partnership is a modest investment—0.1% of the Department of Education’s budget—that pays huge dividends.

**Funding Status:** Table I displays funding levels from FY 2010–Present. Since FY 2011, Title VI/Fulbright programs have sustained a disproportionate *funding reduction* of \$55.7 million or 44%, which has compromised the abilities of grantees to fulfill their missions. Under the FY 2014 appropriations, the nation’s Title VI language, area, and international business national resource centers will compete for the next cycle of 4-year grants. Without adequate restoration of Title VI funds, the nation could lose nearly half of the centers that form the cornerstone of the nation’s deep international knowledge and expertise. This erosion in educational infrastructure cannot be easily replaced. The President’s FY 2014 budget requested a restoration to \$80.9 million, which is an increase of \$10.8 million over the post-sequester FY 2013 appropriation of \$70.2 million. The Senate Appropriations Committee has adopted the President’s proposal.

Table I: International Education Programs funding within the U.S. Department of Education FY10 to Present (in millions of dollars)

Fiscal Year	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13 CR	FY14 Request	FY14 Sen. Comm.
HEA-Title VI	\$110.3	\$68.3	\$66.6	\$63.1	\$73.5	\$73.5
Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6)	\$ 15.6	\$ 7.5	\$ 7.5	\$ 7.1	\$ 7.5	\$ 7.5
<b>TVI/FH Total:</b>	<b>\$125.9</b>	<b>\$75.8</b>	<b>\$74.1</b>	<b>\$70.2</b>	<b>\$80.9</b>	<b>\$80.9</b>

Source: U.S. Department of Education FY 2011–FY 2014 Budget Documents

**Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA):** Renewal of the HEA statute is on the horizon as the House Education and Workforce Committee begins to review programs in the Act. HEA technically expires in 2014 with a one-year automatic extension. Changes to the Higher Education Act impacting international and foreign language education will have implications for our nation’s global competence for years to come.

## K-12 Foreign Language Education

Educating the 21st century American workforce for a globally competitive economy and diverse society calls for foreign language and cultural education beginning at an early age. Fewer than 20% of Americans reported speaking a language other than English in the last census, as opposed to 53% of Europeans. While many other nations—such as the European Union, China, and India—require their students to learn two or more languages, the U.S. is behind. The National Research Council concluded in 2007, **“early language learning in elementary and secondary school is key to establishing a pipeline of students who can eventually reach a high enough level of proficiency in foreign language and culture to meet national needs.”**

According to the U.S. Department of Education, only 44% of high school students are studying any foreign language and less than 1% percent study a critical-need language. A recent survey by the Center for Applied Linguistics found that only 25 percent of American elementary schools even offer foreign languages. Moreover, fewer elementary and middle schools are teaching a foreign language compared to a decade ago, while the number of high schools has not increased.

The **Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP)**, authorized in 1994 and again in 2001 under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is the Department of Education’s only dedicated funding source for K-12 foreign language education. Responding to President George W. Bush’s National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), in FY 2008 Congress began setting aside a portion of funds for 5-year grants to local educational agencies in partnership with higher education institutions for articulated programs of study in a targeted set of foreign languages deemed critical to U.S. national security. The set aside was continued and increased until FLAP funding was zeroed in FY 2012. In 20 years of funding, FLAP has made advances in K-12 language learning, such as in early language, immersion and assessment outcomes. FLAP grantees collaborate with and leverage resources from Title VI centers, ODNI StarTALK and DOD Flagship programs.

**Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA):** Pending ESEA reauthorization bills in the House and Senate have adopted the President’s proposal to eliminate FLAP as an individually funded program. The President recommended consolidation of FLAP into a new authority called “Effective Teaching and Learning for a Well-Rounded Education” along with seven other programs in economics, history, civic education and the arts. Consolidating the program would make foreign language education subject to state and local educational agency priorities. At a time of severe and growing shortages of Americans with adequate foreign language skills, most international education experts believe that ensuring K-12 foreign language education is available to all students requires a dedicated federal funding stream.

**Funding Status:** Table II displays funding for FLAP from FY 2010–Present. Although the President’s consolidation proposal has not yet been authorized, Congress eliminated FLAP funding in FY 2012.

Table II: K-12 Foreign Language Assistance Act funding within the U.S. Department of Education FY10 to Present (in millions of dollars)

Fiscal Year	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13 CR	FY14 Request	FY14 Sen. Comm.
ESEA, Title V-D, Subpart 9, FLAP	\$26.93	\$26.87	-0-	-0-	-0-	-0-

Source: U.S. Department of Education FY 2011–FY 2014 Budget Documents