

**Statement Concerning the Performance and Effectiveness of the Fulbright-Hays Training Programs, Center for International Education and Programs Service in the U. S. Department of Education
For NAS Review**

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For the past 35 years, American Councils, a non-profit professional membership association and exchange organization specializing in the languages and cultures of Russia, Eurasia, and Southeast Europe, has developed and administered professional development programs for American scholars, teachers, and advanced students of Russian and the other languages of the Eurasian and Eastern European region. Since 1978, the American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR), a division of American Councils, has been a U.S. Department of Education grantee organization, annually receiving Fulbright-Hays group projects funds through the 102(b)(6) category of activities of the Department's Center for International Education and Program Services. American Councils has also worked directly with the Department of Education on foreign language and study abroad issues on grants supported by Title VI/IRS, producing studies, teaching materials, and research findings closely connected with the activities of the Fulbright Group Projects program. American Councils has worked generally over the past 35 years on a range of academic and practical issues concerned with overseas learning, immersion learning, student and teacher standards development, language testing, teacher training, and advanced training needs, through grants administered by FIPSE, the U.S. Departments of State (Title VIII/INR), NEH, and NSEP, including the recently inaugurated overseas Flagship programs in Russian and other languages of Eurasia and South Asia.

American Councils currently administers the following grants on behalf of the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs:

- Fulbright Hays Group Projects Abroad, serving approximately fifty teachers and students per year on immersion study abroad programs in Russia, Moldova, Ukraine, the South Caucasus, and Central Asia. Fulbright Hays financial support for participants in these programs has often made a critical difference in the ability of students - particularly undergraduates - to engage in intensive, overseas language study.
- International Research and Studies (IRS) in support of the development of the Advanced Placement (AP) Russian Curriculum and Examination, a standards-based, proficiency-focused program designed to encourage high school learners of Russian to continue their study of the language and culture at the advanced level and to facilitate the articulation of school-to-college learners of Russian.

1. What do you view as the purpose of the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright Hays program(s)?

In broad terms, the purposes of the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs are to build, maintain, and expand foreign language capacity within the U.S. population by underwriting programs, activities, scholarships, research, and materials development that promote the teaching and learning of languages. Much of that effort is concentrated within higher education—appropriate to the Department's location of the division for international education within the Office of Post-secondary Education. The program also contributes to the improvement of teacher education, U. S. national capacity building within K-12 education, and internationalization of the professions and disciplines by addressing the need for better regional, cultural, and linguistic preparation of language educators in the pre-collegiate area, especially teachers of the less commonly taught languages.

The annual congressional appropriation for Title VI and the 102(b)(6) programs of Fulbright-Hays ensure an on-going focus within the federal budget on U.S. national capacity development on language and area studies that is now the basis on which a range of more recent educational initiatives, such as the National Security Foreign Language Initiative (2006), the National Flagship Language Program (2004), and other recent initiatives firmly rest. *Without Title VI and Fulbright-Hays, there would be no broad access to learning within the U. S. educational system, on which to address the linguistic and cultural needs of 21st century American security and economic competitiveness.*

Fulbright-Hays supports a further policy and statutory goal as well. Because of its underlying authorization language and (notional) operational supervision by the William J. Fulbright Scholarship Board, Fulbright-Hays also supports the primary policy objective of furthering mutual understanding and advancing what today is usually termed "public diplomacy." It view of the particular challenges the U. S. faces in public diplomacy, the additional foreign policy component of Fulbright-Hays is worth noting in the discussion of the effectiveness and performance parameters of programs such as Group Projects.

2. What are the program(s)' strengths, weaknesses, and criticisms?

In reviewing the Department's programs, this statement will focus primarily on the Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6) programs, and particularly American Councils' experience with Group Projects.

The key strength of the program funding model is that it permits the Department (and American Councils) to focus support on undergraduate and graduate students, as well as pre-service and in-service teachers to pursue further study of the target language and culture in structured overseas immersion programs. The success of such study is based on careful selection of participants from a national pool, open to any qualified applicant from any accredited institution in the U. S., on-site supervision by a full-time U. S. specialist, and effective utilization of the resources of indigenous institutions, authentic classrooms, homestays, peer tutors, internships, and cultural immersion. American Councils' approach to language learning is grounded in the concept that key aspects of language and cultural acquisition, particularly at the more advanced levels, are best (and frequently only) attained by direct study within the target culture.

Figure 1

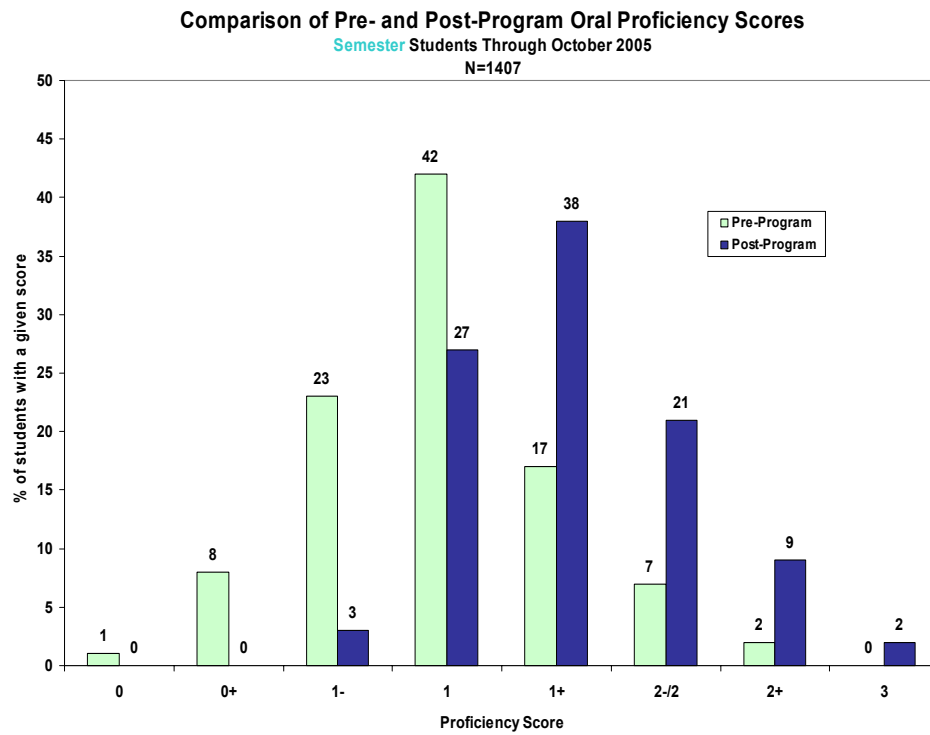
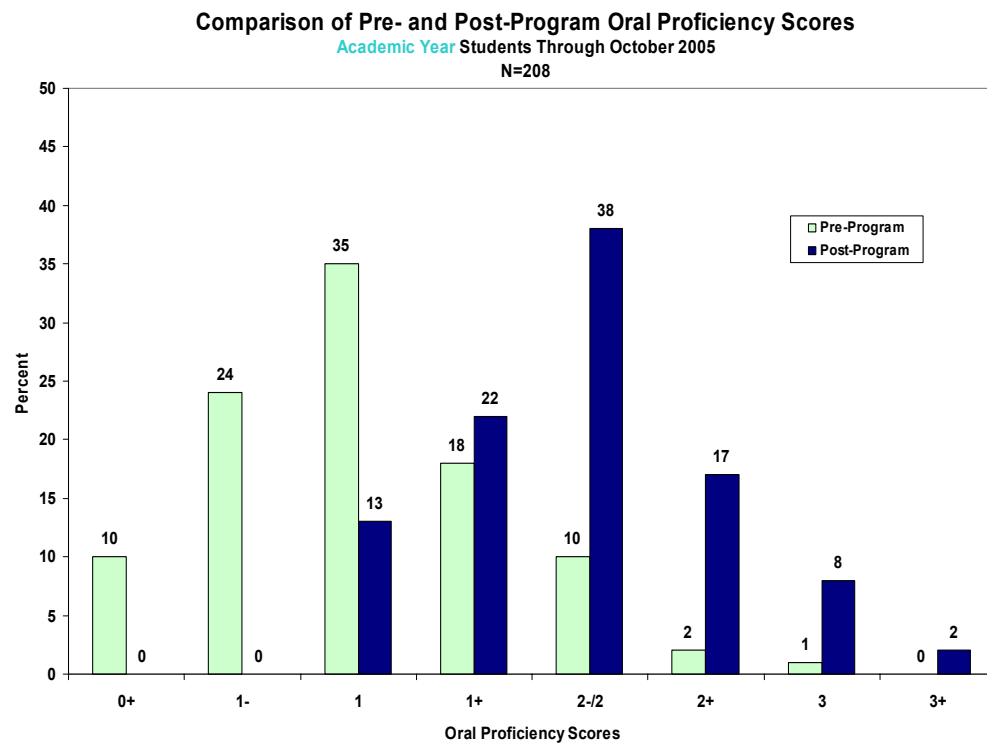


Figure 2



On-going evaluations of the language gains of participants in Group Projects Abroad have permitted us to validate this approach and introduce a range of refinements and program treatments over time, which have contributed, in turn, to the effectiveness of training, especially with the relative opening up of universities in the former Soviet and South East European space after 1991. For example, there is adequate data available in Russian today to predict with some certainty language gains during study abroad based on initial level of proficiency, duration of immersion, and several other measurement variables.¹ (In Figures 1 and 2 above, the light colored bars show actual program inputs of the Fulbright/Hays program of 225 US sending institutions over the past 15 years).

The programs American Councils conducts on behalf of the Department permit a professional association like ACTR to conduct annual national competitions for Fulbright-Hays Fellowships, including active recruitment of traditionally under-represented groups. Independent peer review panels guarantee fairness and uniform standards in a process that helps American Councils assure the Department on a regular basis that we are finding the best and most qualified candidates to utilize the limited resources available for supporting the study of Russian and the other Eurasian languages within American education. In order to maximize limited funding, American Councils offers variable “needs-based” awards to students and graduate students selected for the program, using standard financial need assessment mechanisms.

American Councils is pleased to express overall satisfaction with the Fulbright-Hays program model and with the results that it has enabled our organization to achieve over the past 25 years with successive generations of American students and teachers of Russian. In particular, we wish to commend the leadership of the Center and the Group Projects program staff, who have been responsive to grantee questions and concerns and flexible in dealing with the special demands faced by the grantee in delivering and supporting advanced training for Americans in reasonably complex foreign environments.

In terms of areas of potential improvement, one might cite:

1. The overall low levels of funding (in terms of constant 1967 dollars) which limit significantly the number and size of grant awards available even to the most qualified program participant. There is ample evidence to support the position that in the major language fields like Chinese and Russian, the present number of fellowships awarded under Fulbright-Hays could be doubled without any discernible decline in U. S. applicant quality.
2. The absence of allowances within the Fulbright-Hays grant-making structure for most categories of standard administrative expenses incurred by the grantee organization in the course of regular program implementation. It is likely that a larger field of potential

¹ Davidson, Dan E. *Capabilities & Outputs of the U.S. Education System: Proficiency Outputs*, The National Language Conference, July 2004. <http://www.nlconference.org/docs/NLC_Commentary_Davidson.doc>.

grantee organizations and institutions would apply for Fulbright-Hays/Group Projects competitions, were the allowances for standard administrative expenses covered by the program.

3. The existence of a cap on institutional overhead chargeable to the Fulbright-Hays which is well below the negotiated overhead rates of most, if not all, current grantees;

Additional funding of the program could also have a positive effect on program quality by supporting even current levels of overseas Fulbright-Hays participants for longer periods of study. American Councils [extensive](#) research on this subject makes abundantly clear that there is a strong positive relationship between duration of structured in-country study and language acquisition at the advanced and superior levels in multiple skills. The data in Figures 1 and 2 above compare the gains of semester versus academic year Fulbright-Hays participants with comparable pre-program proficiency ratings and academic skills. Moreover, the actual difference in cost of a semester versus a year of study abroad is relatively small.

3. How would you define "success" for the program(s)?

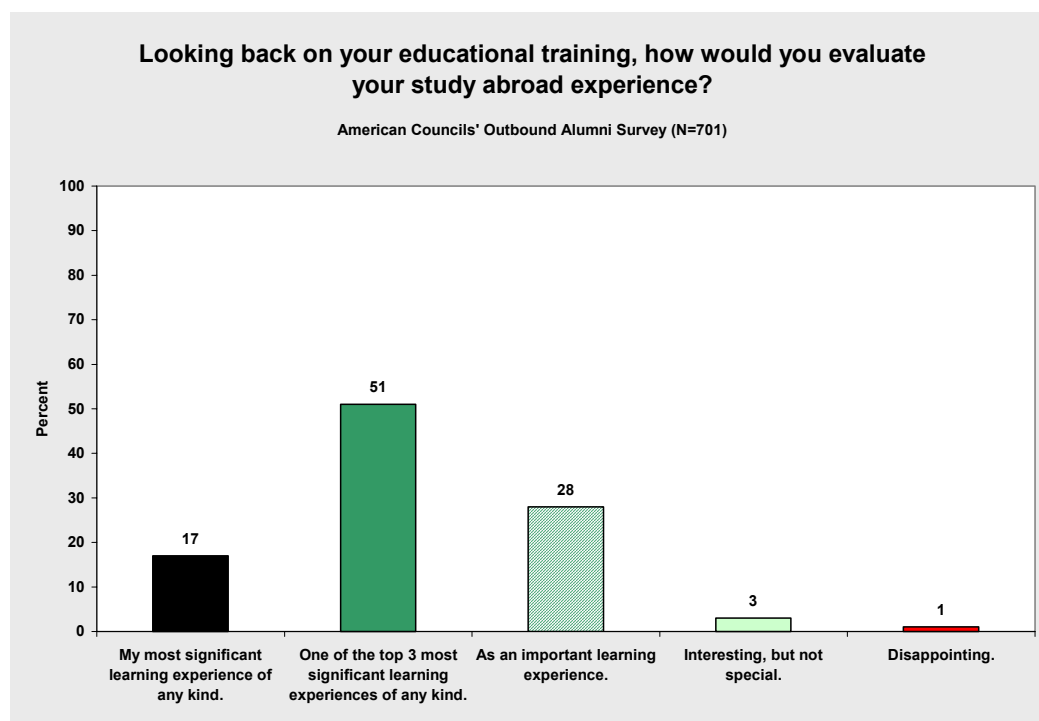
For American Councils, we see success in these programs on several levels. Most fundamentally, we measure our own success with the net language gain of each student from their period of study abroad in the target language for which they have received Fulbright-Hays assistance. We do this in part through pre-program and post-program assessment of their language skills (noted above), an effort at outcomes assessment we have conducted since the inception of our programs.

We measure our success by the number of students and teachers we are able to reach through the program. With a mission to support the teaching of Russian and the other major languages of Eurasia, American Councils naturally views an increase in participation as a good sign, and seeks ways to attract interested and successful students to pursue advanced study of this language. It has been gratifying in recent years that we have seen an increasing interest in programs for the study of other Eurasian languages, including Azeri, Kazakh, Tajik, Uzbek, and others. To be fair, some of that growth is attributable to our offering more languages in the region and consolidation in program providers. It was only about 15 years ago that the Department of Education supported three separate and essentially self-duplicating Russian language programs in Russian alone; now it supports one major program. It was not that many years ago that many U.S. universities maintained their own language-based study abroad programs in Russia (usually in Moscow or St. Petersburg); now a number of those institutions have turned to program providers—including American Councils—to organize and oversee in-country language programs in world regions that present an array of logistical, political, and legal challenges for off-shore university programming.

We also measure our success by what we later learn our students have gone on to do with their educational training and language expertise. We track alumni and, for example, have recently published a 25-year longitudinal survey of the impact of the overseas language-based study abroad program on their professional lives and their worldview. That study, among many other

significant findings, demonstrates the broad range of economic sectors and career paths that have been advanced by the overseas study experience. It also helps us better appreciate the relative contribution of the study abroad experience within the overall professional career trajectory. *Sixty-eight percent of the alumni sample (N = 750) identified the Fulbright-Hays study abroad component as either the top or among the top three most significant learning experiences of their lifetime!* (And in many cases, these professionals have moved 20 or more years into their careers since the time of the study abroad experience. Figure 3.)²

Figure 3



4. How would you determine if the program(s) are "successful" or "effective"?

One major indicator of program effectiveness is tied to our ability to maximize the net language and cultural “gain” that students are able to achieve on the program, based on the student’s own starting point. For example, the effectiveness of a program for a relatively novice language learner interested in the basics of effective oral communication in the target language is significantly different than for those who seek proficiency at ILR Levels 3, 3+, or 4, whether the participant is a business major preparing for a career in international business or a physics major conducting research with counterparts in a Russian physics laboratory. In general, Americans still tend to underestimate seriously the time required to achieve high levels of language competence, just as they continue to underestimate the burden that language deficiency imposes on effective communication, presentation, and interpretation of information in a foreign language. Recent efforts by U. S. government agencies to “raise the bar” for language

² Dan Davidson and Susan Lehmann, “Twenty-Five Year Longitudinal Analysis of the Professional Careers of ACTR Study Abroad Participants,” *Russian Language Journal*, Vol. 52 (2005), 193-221.

proficiency for government language professionals gives some hope that the former mindset may finally be changing, at least among federal policy makers.

Both our success and our effectiveness therefore have varied scales. It is useful to remember that whatever our objectives were a generation or even a decade ago, language learning today is much more utilitarian and U.S. higher education needs to do as good a job in training future scientists and business leaders as it has historically done in training future analysts and academics.

5. Would you measure effectiveness differently for the various Department of Education Title VI and Fulbright Hays programs?

Institutionally-based programs designed to build and maintain institutional capacity have a different set of characteristics than those that seek to conduct national scholarship competitions for overseas study.

In addressing this particular topic, we urge the Review Committee to consider the differing underlying policy objectives of the Department's various programs. As noted above, the Title VI programs have their roots in the National Defense Education Act—born of the Sputnik era. For Group Projects, and the Fulbright-Hays programs generally, the statutory link is with the original 1946 Fulbright Act, expanded and grounded by the 1961 Fulbright-Hays Act, conceptualized from a different point in our history tied to our post-World War II effort to build a more unified world.

Both of these policy streams strike us as complementary and relevant to our national interest today, though we are now influenced by more contemporary concerns related to international economic competitiveness and our efforts to fight a global war on terrorism.

6. What data/information do you use to measure the effectiveness of this program(s)?

American Councils sought funding from Title VI/International Research and Studies as well as the Ford Foundation to launch a comprehensive data collection and pre-/post-program language assessment of all program participants, beginning in the mid-1980's. That data collection and testing effort continues to the present day and has been enhanced, as well, by a longitudinal study of career patterns of Fulbright-Hays alumni (cited above). In addition, American Councils collects regular program evaluation data from each and every program participant, program instructors, and program resident directors, which are also analyzed and used regularly for program assessment and program fine-tuning.

7. What data/information do you think is necessary or should be used to measure effectiveness?

American Councils has created a reasonably robust stream of quantitative data on language gain during study abroad and also for alumni career trajectories, important elements of which were supported by Title VI/IRS. American Councils has also contributed to a number of more ethnographic studies on overseas learning to understand better the specific “value added” of study abroad as well as to account for some of the variation that is evident in the results of study

abroad, including Brecht and Robinson (1994), Matthews (1998), Rivers (1997), and Pellegrino (2005). Qualitative research projects are probably best funded through independent peer review processes, such as those provided by Title VI/IRS. Data collection, testing, and the development of evaluation instruments on program performance require direct investment by program administrators and grantees that currently exceeds the scale for such activities allowed by Fulbright-Hays budgets. New funding for systematic evaluation of program performance, such as those noted above in the American Councils research, would likely be of benefit to the full range of Fulbright-Hays programs and grantees.

8. How would you use the results of an evaluation?

Evaluation data fulfill both both formative and summative functions in program administration. Evaluation data (enumerated above), combined with site visit and participant reports are the single most important source of input for on-going program review and program management. Language gain and performance-based assessments provide federal funders, home institutions, and potential employers with reliable indicators of the competence levels of program participants, using a widely accepted interagency government proficiency scale (ILR).

9. How do you view the role of the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright Hays programs as similar or different from the role of other related federal programs?

There has been to some degree a substantial expansion and diversification of U.S. government programs related to those of the Department of Education's Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs—even within the Department. To the degree programs as varied as the National Security Education Program (NSEP), the Gilman Scholarship Program, and the Foreign Language Assistance Program (FLAP), are related, it is because they seek—for various distinctive public policy reasons—to address an American deficit of understanding and learning related to the global community in which we now unavoidably find ourselves. Each of these programs, together with Title VI and Fulbright-Hays 102(b)(6), seek to build U.S. capacity to understand the world in which we live, with particular attention to language capacity, cultural sophistication, and expertise in the international aspects of given academic and professional fields.

The Department of Education's programs tend to be based in the areas of language and area studies—with the notable focus on international business—as an essential component of our nation's educational capacity. It particularly fosters the establishment and maintenance of that capacity in our institutions of higher education, and it supports—though probably not adequately—our research about and evaluation of that capacity. In this regard, the Department's role is both unique and essential. If we did not yet have this focus somewhere in our government, we would need to build it.

What these departmental programs have not done—and for which we have other programs in government and in the private sector—is specifically address other aspects of our national needs with regard to international studies and foreign languages. NSEP/NFLP, for example, addresses an essential national need for highly expert language and cultural skills—typically imbedded

with other subject matter expertise (e.g., public health, international development, political science, etc.)—in critical important languages related to strategically important countries and regions.

The Title VI and Fulbright/Hays programs are also complemented by the Department of State's Title VIII programs on Eurasian and Eastern European Research and Training. This highly specialized program funds both the needed training in languages and the essential basic research on critical policy concerns that are necessary for the public policy analysis our government and the academy undertake about this world region. The Department of Education's Center for International Education is represented on the Title VIII inter-agency Advisory Board.

American Councils believes this network of interlocking programs and targeted program objectives contribute greatly to the national interest. The question as we see it is not whether one Department can administer most or all of them (which we candidly doubt in the context of the American political context and the differing cultures of each administering agency), but how best to ensure their coordination. We believe the government—both the executive and legislative branches—does have the tools and structures in place to achieve the appropriate level of coordination and complementarity.