



THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

Dr. Brian Whalen
President and CEO
Forum on Education Abroad
P.O. Box 1773
Dickinson College
Carlisle, Pennsylvania 17013

Dear Dr. Whalen:

I am writing to ask for your support to realize President Obama's goal of dramatically increasing the number of American students studying in China. Today, more than ever, there is a global understanding that no major challenge can be resolved without the active engagement of both the United States and China. That is why President Obama has called upon the nation to build up a cadre of Americans knowledgeable about Chinese history, culture, and language – a generation of Americans who study China and have studied in China. Specifically, he has challenged the nation to send 100,000 students to China over the next four years, a significant increase over current numbers.

To reach this goal requires your help. Today, I offer this challenge to leaders of American institutes of higher education and study-abroad providers: Double the number of your students who study in China by 2014. The task ahead is ambitious, but I am confident that we can achieve this goal. The Department of State is endeavoring to encourage a broad cross-section of American educational institutions and private-sector donors to support this effort.

The "100,000 Strong" initiative is a central element of the Administration's broader strategy to increase people-to-people engagement around the world. Expanding international academic exchange and collaboration is essential to addressing the common global challenges we face. The State Department encourages young Americans to seek the life-changing experience of study abroad – whether in China or in other destinations. We also ask that your institutions continue to welcome more international students to your campuses, providing to them the opportunity to learn side-by-side with their American peers and share their unique perspectives.

Together we can foster the next generation of leaders charged with securing an ever more prosperous and peaceful future for us all. I hope you will join us in this important endeavor.

Sincerely yours,



Hillary Rodham Clinton

Enclosure:

“100,000 Strong” bulletin



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Citing the strategic importance of the U.S.-China relationship, in November 2009, President Barack Obama announced the “100,000 Strong” initiative, a national effort designed to increase dramatically the number, and diversify the composition, of American students studying in China. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton officially launched the initiative in May 2010 in Beijing. The Chinese government strongly supports the initiative and has already committed 10,000 “Bridge Scholarships” for American students to study in China.

This initiative seeks to prepare the next generation of American experts on China who will be charged with managing the growing political, economic and cultural ties between the United States and China. The initiative also seeks to develop specific opportunities and funding sources for underrepresented students to study in China.

The need for Americans to gain greater exposure to and understanding of China is clear: there is perhaps no more important or complex relationship in the world than that between the United States and China in terms of securing global peace and security. Virtually no major international issue – whether global economic recovery or climate change or nuclear non-proliferation can be solved without the active engagement of both the United States and China, working in concert.

Yet Americans have much to learn about China. According to the Institute for International Education’s 2010 Open Doors report, almost 10 times more Chinese students come to the United States for educational programs than Americans who study in China, and 600 times more Chinese study the English language than Americans study Mandarin. This imbalance in knowledge can undermine strategic trust between the two countries. Redressing this imbalance in knowledge is essential to ensuring that Americans have the cultural understanding and language skills that underpin effective diplomacy and foreign policy. It will also enhance our students’ ability to succeed academically and professionally in the global economy.

Interest in China is on the rise among Americans. The number of Americans studying in China grew 30 percent annually from 2001-2007. Numbers grew only four percent in 2008-09 (compared to a 30 percent increase in the number of Chinese who study in the United States), a lower than usual increase attributed to the financial crisis. While this organic growth is encouraging, the current trends may be insufficient to meet the real challenges and opportunities of this vitally important relationship.

The “100,000 Strong Initiative” complements successful existing study abroad and language study efforts by the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the U.S. Department of Education, and the U.S. Department of Defense.

Unlike those programs, however, “100,000 Strong” will rely fully on private-sector financial support and will be implemented by non-governmental organizations. Early estimates suggest that at least \$68 million will be required to fund this ambitious effort.

For more information, please contact Carola McGiffert at mcgiffertc@state.gov. Ms. McGiffert is a Senior Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and the Pacific, and Director of the 100,000 Strong Initiative.