



## **100,000 Strong: U.S. Students in China Initiative**

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. Eight 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, and we expect those numbers to continue to grow for the foreseeable future. In the 2007-08 school year, for example, 13,165 American college students and an estimated 1,000 high school students went to China for some type of study program. While this organic growth is encouraging, the current trends may be insufficient to meet the real challenges and opportunities of this vitally important relationship.

This effort 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, the “100,000 Strong” Initiative relies fully on private-sector philanthropic support to direct funds to existing U.S.-China educational exchange programs that are seeking to expand their programs. Early estimates suggest that at least \$68 million will be required to fund this ambitious effort.

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