

Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) found that students who study abroad have improved academic performance upon returning home, higher graduation rates, and graduate within a shorter time period. This study focused on college students, but there is also evidence that high school students who engage in some form of study abroad graduate at higher rates and are better prepared for college and the workplace.

That is why we are working closely with community colleges and minority-serving institutions across the country, and we hope to be able to announce some specific initiatives targeting those underrepresented groups over the next month or so. With regard to underrepresented groups on the post-secondary level in DC, we have been in contact with Howard University, a historically black college, and are reaching out to the University of the District of Columbia and the Community College of DC as well.

In addition, we must develop a pipeline of students who are interested in learning Mandarin and learning about China. That must start in K-12. I applaud the growing number of public and public-charter elementary, middle and high schools that are currently offering Chinese; I hope more schools will follow their lead. DC high school students should take advantage of existing study-in-China programs.

Let me mention a few of the existing programs before moving on to new ones that we hope to encourage.

The U.S. Government, with the support of Congress, funds several scholarship programs to sponsor studies in China, including the Fulbright U.S. Student and Scholar Programs, Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship Program, Critical Language Scholarships for Intensive Summer Institutes, David L. Boren Scholarships, and the Language Flagship program. All these excellent programs support the shared goal of expanding access to international knowledge and skills, and some – such as the National Security Language Initiative for Youth (or NSLI-Y) -- are specifically targeted at high school students.

The Chinese government has already committed 10,000 Bridge Scholarships for American students to study in China, in support of the 100,000 Strong Initiative. The Bridge program, which is being run through U.S.-based Confucius Institutes – of which there are two in the DC area, at the University of Maryland College Park and at George Mason in Virginia – include scholarships for 800 high school students every year to participate in “Bridge Summer Camp”, a multi-week language and cultural immersion summer program in China. I encourage DC students to research and apply to these U.S. and Chinese government programs.

These are terrific programs, but they aren't intended to meet all of the growing need and growing demand. The U.S. Government sends more American students to China through its programs than to any other country in the world, but this is still only a fraction of the total number of U.S. students who study abroad with the support of parents, schools, local communities, the private sector and non-governmental organizations. So our task is to promote more of these opportunities – and help them be more financially accessible.

The 100,000 Strong Initiative will be funded by the private sector and implemented by non-governmental organizations. The State Department will act as champion for study-in-China programs as well as matchmaker between those programs and private donors.

It is in this capacity that, almost immediately after starting at the State Department in September, I contacted the Chancellor's office and indicated my desire to work with the DC school system to develop a pilot project for DC students. I also reached out to Sally Schwartz, whom I have known for a few years.

As you have heard, through CGEL, Sally has helped a limited number of DC students to study in China in recent years. CGEL has the capacity to scale up in a big way, and we are committed to supporting that effort. Specifically, Sally has developed a strong proposal for DC, and we are now working together to identify potential sources of funding for CGEL. I am confident CGEL can develop a strong DC-focused program that enables many hundreds of local public school students to study in China. Can you imagine the impact that could have on our kids, our schools, and our local economy?

In addition, we hope to also identify opportunities for educators and administrators to experience China first-hand. This will help DC school leaders and policy makers develop the curricular enhancements for DC schools that will be critical to ensuring that students' China experience has a sustained impact on their lives and those of their classmates.

I want to mention that we are encouraging the development, by a private entity, of a robust China alumni network that will be available to students for free to maintain connections to China that will facilitate social, academic and professional networking.

Finally, I hope that the State Board of Education will seriously examine ways in which to integrate global education and language into curricular reform. Global education does not need to come at the expense of math, science and reading. Our kids deserve the opportunity to develop all these skills; moreover, they will need them in the 21st century workplace and we do them a disservice – and put them at a disadvantage – if we do not fully equip them. CGEL and its expert network have the capacity to help provide a roadmap for how DCPS could implement a robust Chinese-language program, and I encourage the Board to work with CGEL on this important effort.

Working together under the umbrella of the Obama administration's 100,000 Strong Initiative, we can have exponential impact. The initiative will provide opportunities for Americans to understand better a country that is at once one of the oldest and most important world civilizations and a major modern power. It will benefit U.S.-China strategic and economic relations over the long term. Most importantly, it will have lasting impact on American students and improve their readiness for continued education, work and leadership -- and therefore enhance our shared future.

Thank you very much for your time.