

# Global Policy Fellows Program: Lessons Learned

BY ALISA F. CUNNINGHAM

June 2009

A REPORT BY  
Institute for Higher  
Education Policy

SUPPORTED BY  
Ford Foundation

Access and Success  
Accountability  
Diversity  
Finance  
Global Impact



**The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP)** is an independent, nonprofit organization that is dedicated to access and success in postsecondary education around the world. Established in 1993, the Washington, D.C.-based organization uses unique research and innovative programs to inform key decision makers who shape public policy and support economic and social development. IHEP's Web site, [www.ihep.org](http://www.ihep.org), features an expansive collection of higher education information available free of charge and provides access to some of the most respected professionals in the fields of public policy and research.



**INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**  
1320 19th Street, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036

202 861 8223 **TELEPHONE**  
202 861 9307 **FACSIMILE**  
[www.ihep.org](http://www.ihep.org) **WEB**

**The Ford Foundation** is an independent, nonprofit grant-making organization. For more than half a century it has been a resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide, guided by its goals of strengthening democratic values, reducing poverty and injustice, promoting international cooperation and advancing human achievement. With headquarters in New York, the foundation has offices in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Russia. For more information about the Ford Foundation, go to [www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org).

**FORD FOUNDATION**

**FORD FOUNDATION**  
320 East 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10017

212 573 5000 **TELEPHONE**  
212 351 3677 **FACSIMILE**  
[www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org) **WEB**



# Global Policy Fellows Program: Lessons Learned

**BY ALISA F. CUNNINGHAM**

June 2009

**A REPORT PREPARED BY**  
Institute for Higher Education Policy

**WITH SUPPORT FROM**  
Ford Foundation

## Acknowledgments

The Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) would like to thank all of the Global Policy Fellows who made the program the exciting venture that it was. In addition, a number of staff and others made this program possible, including IHEP President Michelle Asha Cooper; Vice President for Research and Programs Alisa F. Cunningham; Senior Associates Thomas D. Parker and Patti McGill Peterson; Managing Director of Operations Terry T. Nixon; and Research Project Manager Jennifer Ramsey. In addition, we would like to thank the program's evaluator, Pat Maloney; Jamie Merisotis, president of the Lumina Foundation for Education (formerly president of IHEP); Tia T. Gordon; and former IHEP Research Analyst Ryan Hahn for all their advice and hard work for this program.

We would like to offer special thanks to the Ford Foundation for its financial support of the Global Policy Fellows Program. The views expressed in the report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Ford Foundation or IHEP.

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	04
<b>Introduction</b>	06
<b>Overview of the Program</b>	08
<b>Highlights of the Thematic Issue Briefs</b>	12
<b>Discussion of Policy Models</b>	14
<b>Lessons Learned from the Global Policy Fellows</b>	18
<b>Framework for Policy Collaboration</b>	22
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix A: Global Fellows 2007–09	24
Appendix B: Expert Speakers at Global Policy Fellows Program Meetings	25
Appendix C: Global Policy Fellows Program Advisory Committee	26

# Executive Summary

Throughout the world, the demand for higher education is increasing exponentially, pushed forward by the realities of a global economy and accompanied by pressure to open up opportunities for prospective students from all backgrounds. The importance of a knowledgeable, highly skilled population has become clear and many countries have made great strides in increasing the numbers of students who attend and graduate from college. Although some of these policies have contributed to positive gains, gaps between traditional students and historically disadvantaged students remain in most countries.

At the same time, there is often a lack of capacity to analyze these issues and recommend changes to existing policies or new programs altogether. Yet it is increasingly important to involve policymakers in discussions about what works well—or doesn't work at all—across borders. To address these challenges, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) created the Global Policy Fellows Program (GFPF) to improve the knowledge and skills of the next generation of policy analysts and leaders.

The goal of the program is to improve individual capacity to conduct research and analysis, and create a global network of policy analysts and researchers who are motivated to address challenges faced by underserved populations. This report describes the program, highlights some of its findings, and provides a framework for international collaboration. It hopes to spur future ideas for building policy development capacity worldwide, with a special emphasis on higher education, where strong measures are needed to address continuing gaps in access and success.

The Global Policy Fellows Program provides a model for cultivating and nurturing a network of people who are interested

in higher educational policy. The Fellows' experiences in the program illustrate a number of important principles that can make such collaboration effective:

- 1. The program should use a combination of cross-national and in-country activities.** International collaboration is excellent experience that participants can take with them, and participants will benefit greatly if they can apply the policy development and analysis activities to their own country.
- 2. Meetings should be hosted in a variety of contexts and should take advantage of in-country assistance.** Program meetings should be held in various locations to reap the most benefits and to enable program staff to recruit experts from widely differing backgrounds.
- 3. The program should encourage the use of a variety of resources and activities to analyze and develop policy.** A program can foster expertise in policy development in a variety of ways, including collaborations on policy research, brainstorming about policies in their own countries, and refining their ideas through mutual feedback.



**4. Staff must ensure that teams of participants reflect a balance of backgrounds and that team leaders are supported.**

In a successful networking program, participants will meet and develop relationships with others who can share different skills and knowledge, and to generate the most impact, the dynamics among team members should be considered.

**5. Peer feedback is an important component of collaborative writing.**

Resources and knowledge of staff and outside experts are invaluable, but interaction with peers, both structured and informal, is equally important, as participants stand to gain the most from each other.

**6. Learning by doing is effective, but regular check-ins and staff interventions are necessary to keep the process on track.**

Simply describing international collaboration and policy development is not enough—the experience must be ingrained so it lasts after the program ends.

**7. In a program that promotes international collaboration, communication tools must be varied, effective, and clearly explained.**


There should be flexibility in determining the best alternative ways to communicate within the team and with program staff.

**8. Participants should have some knowledge or experience in policy development;**

these tools can be reinforced early in the program. Programs that target people who are in the early stages of their careers need to ensure that participants have enough knowledge to benefit fully from the activities.

**9. Availability of data and other information can be both a challenge and a learning opportunity.**

Data-driven policy-making is essential in any context, but in many cases existing data are not applicable to the issue at hand, or do not exist at all. At the same time, there is an opportunity to raise the consciousness of participants about the value of data and the need to push for more and better data collection.

The GPF program is just the beginning. There are many ways to help individuals, and groups of individuals, frame policy issues, collect data, analyze data, and present findings to government and other stakeholders. New programs can narrow their focus by region, topic, or audience; they can target policymakers or those who are interested in influencing them. The need for highly skilled experts in policy development is growing, and many countries would profit from the experience. Ultimately, as the global community becomes closer, the development of a new cadre of these experts in the field of higher education policy will have long-term impacts for the future. 

# Introduction

Throughout the world, the demand for higher education is increasing exponentially, pushed forward by the realities of a global economy and accompanied by pressure to open up opportunities for prospective students from all backgrounds. The importance of a knowledgeable, highly skilled population has become clear and many countries have made great strides in increasing the numbers of students who attend and graduate from college. However, as governments increase the resources dedicated to higher education, questions remain—how will those resources be distributed? Will the benefits apply to all groups in society, or will some groups continue to face barriers to college enrollment and attainment? These questions are critical to virtually every country across the globe.

Many governments have implemented policies to address the challenges of access to and success in higher education. Although some of these policies have contributed to positive gains, gaps between traditional students and historically disadvantaged students remain in most countries. The nature of these gaps may be different from country to country—high-income versus low-income, rural versus urban, racial/ethnic majority versus minority, male versus female, and so on—but they involve some of the same barriers to higher education.

At the same time, there is often a lack of capacity to analyze these issues and recommend changes to existing policies or new programs altogether. Many academic exchange programs and international fellowship programs exist to build networks, increase knowledge of other countries, or conduct research. Similar programs are lacking for people who are interested in policy development and implementation. This is certainly true in the field of higher education policy, despite the crucial role that the sector plays. Yet it is increasingly important to involve policymakers in discussions about what works well—or doesn't work at all—across borders.

To address these challenges, the Institute for Higher Education Policy (IHEP) created the Global Policy Fellows Program (GPFP) to improve the knowledge and skills of the next generation of policy analysts and leaders. The goal of the program is to improve individual capacity to conduct research and analysis, and create a global network of policy analysts and researchers who are motivated to address challenges faced by underserved populations.

This report describes the program, highlights some of its findings, and provides a framework for international collaboration. The goal is to encourage in the area of policy analysis and implementation. It hopes to spur future ideas for building policy development capacity worldwide, with a special emphasis on higher education, where strong measures are needed to address continuing gaps in access and success. 





# Overview of the Program

In the program's inaugural year, the 2007–09 cohort of Fellows included two- to four-person teams from six countries—Brazil, Mongolia, the Netherlands, South Africa, Ukraine, and the United States (see Appendix A). The countries were chosen to represent the diversity of regions, economic and political development, and higher education systems. Fellows came from a variety of professional backgrounds; they were early-career policy analysts in government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and professional associations, emerging leaders at university-based research centers, and others in a position to influence policy. The countries differed in terms of their context for higher education policy (**FIGURE 1**). For example, as noted by the Fellows:

- **Brazil:** A developing country with market needs for new skills, Brazil is trying to greatly increase college enrollment; however, that increase may affect quality, especially in the private sector.
- **Mongolia:** In this postcommunist agrarian economy, virtually all higher education institutions are located in the capital city.
- **Netherlands:** This multicultural country has historically distinguished between indigenous (*autochtonen*) and nonindigenous (*allochtonen*) students; higher education has experienced a substantial increase in the number of nonindigenous students.
- **South Africa:** Since the demise of apartheid, the entire education system has focused primarily on removing barriers and providing access to higher education for Black students, disadvantaged groups, and women.
- **Ukraine:** Years of postcommunist reforms have led to an increase in the number of higher education institutions and the number of people who graduate from them, but employers have criticized the level of recent graduates' skills, and there are obvious disparities in access.
- **United States:** Despite high and increasing enrollment, the country faces gaps in access and success for disadvantaged groups, affordability issues, and stagnation in degree completion.

Despite these contextual differences, all six countries face similar challenges in providing their citizens with a quality postsecondary education. The Global Policy Fellow Program allowed individual and group exploration of these challenges while at the same time fostering capacity to use that knowledge to effect policy change.

*We believe that our group's findings make a great contribution to policy research, cover an absolutely new area and experience, and are a valuable addition to any policy research.*

**FIGURE 1**

## Selected Country Indicators

	MONGOLIA	BRAZIL	UKRAINE	NETHERLANDS	UNITED STATES	SOUTH AFRICA
Population (millions)	3.0	198.7	45.7	16.7	307.2	49.1
Population growth rate	1.5%	1.2%	-.63%	.41%	.98%	.28%
Median age	25.3	28.6	39.5	40.5	36.7	24.4
Percent urban	57%	86%	68%	82%	82%	61%
Education expenditures as % of GDP	5%	4%	6.3%	5.3%	5.3%	5.4%
GDP growth	8.9%	5.2%	2.1%	1.8%	1.3%	2.8%
GDP per capita (PPP)	\$3,200	\$10,000	\$6,900	\$40,300	\$47,000	\$10,000
Unemployment	2.8%	8%	3%	4.5%	7.2%	21.7%
GINI Index (1 = greatest inequality)*	97	10	107	108	44	2

\* THE GINI INDEX RANKS COUNTRIES BY THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME.

SOURCES: U.S. CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, 2009, THE WORLD FACTBOOK (AVAILABLE AT: [HTTPS://WWW.CIA.GOV/LIBRARY/PUBLICATIONS/THE-WORLD-FACTBOOK/GEOS/MG.HTML](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mg.html)).

The program included three meetings—in Washington, D.C.; Cape Town and Pretoria, South Africa; and Bellagio, Italy—and two distinct but overlapping phases. In the first phase, the Fellows worked with their colleagues from other countries, deepening their understanding of the process and goals of international collaboration. In the second phase, they worked with other Fellows from their home country, using the experiences and resources of the program to address issues of access and success in higher education in the context of their own nation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Direct quotations from the Fellows are highlighted throughout this report in order to share their experiences.

## Expert Resources

Throughout the program, experts were brought in to speak to the Fellows about policy development. These experts included academics, policy researchers, and government officials who had been involved in issues of access and success in higher education. At the first meeting, to provide a background for the Fellows, presenters introduced the concepts of policy formation and discussed several topics important to higher education policy. At the second meeting, the Fellows explored the experience of South Africa—they heard in detail from government ministers, academics, and others who were involved in disman-

*Working on the cross-national project was clearly the biggest challenge, but also the most rewarding.*

ting apartheid and creating (and attempting to implement) new policies. At the final meeting, in Italy, the Fellows learned more about the Bologna Process and its importance for change in Europe and around the world. (See Appendix B for a list of speakers at the three meetings.)

### **Cross-Country Collaboration**

At the first meeting, the Fellows were grouped into four teams of four Fellows from different countries. They were asked to consider topics central to higher education access: (1) the financing of institutions and students, (2) the trend toward privatization of higher education, (3) transitions from secondary to higher education, and (4) issues related to institutional capacity. Over the next few months, the teams collaborated remotely to narrow the broad topics and write an issue brief. The teams received feedback from their colleagues on their draft papers at the second meeting, then finished developing the papers over the next few months. The papers were published as issue briefs between March and June, 2009.

The goal of the first phase was for the Fellows to experience collaboration in a multicountry context. Some of the Fellows had more experience than others in policy research and inter-

national collaboration, and some had more knowledge about their chosen topic. Part of the goal was for the Fellows to learn how to overcome various challenges inherent in collaborating remotely with people from other countries.

In addition, the first phase allowed an exploration of the importance of data-driven policymaking. Part of the exercise was to learn how to find, analyze, and present data to policymakers. However, the countries were very different in terms of availability of quality data, and many of the Fellows had to find ways to overcome this obstacle in their research.

### **Country-Specific Work**

After the second meeting, the Fellows applied their experience in the cross-country collaboration to think about the obstacles to policy in their own countries. Working in new teams that represented their own countries, the Fellows synthesized national policies that affect disadvantaged populations and began to formulate new policy models or changes to existing models. Several of the Fellows actually tested their models before the final meeting in August 2008, while others received feedback from their colleagues and continued to develop their plans.

*Policy analysis and development are complex processes, subject to many variables; hence, working collaboratively is important. Policy should be grounded in sound principles and research, informed by wide consultation, empirical investigation, and reflection. A policy is a living document, subject to different interpretations and with real-life impact.*

This second phase of the program was directed toward acquiring an in-depth understanding of research-based policy development. The Fellows experienced the process of policy development and got a sense of the challenges involved in implementation. They also clarified their understanding of what it means to be disadvantaged in their home country and how much work is needed to close gaps in higher education access and degree attainment.

### **Communication**

Between meetings, the Fellows communicated through a combination of teleconferencing, e-mail, and a Web-based communication tool (Webcenter) that allowed online chats and discussion forums. In the second phase of the program, biweekly online discussions were held on certain themes that might help the Fellows develop their policy models. These themes included the definition of “disadvantage,” the availability of data, and the actual process of policy development.

The GPFP was a multifaceted program in which specific components targeted various types of skill-building. The Fellows completed a wide range of activities that increased their ability to participate in cross-national policy development. ☞

# Highlights of the Thematic Issue Briefs

The Fellows prepared issue briefs on topics that are crucial to the future of higher education.<sup>2</sup> The issue briefs revealed differences and commonalities among the countries represented in the program, and fostered a process of review and feedback through which all the Fellows could see how different country contexts affect the potential for policy change. This process illustrated two of the key goals of the program: (1) building a knowledge base centered on the contextual differences of different nations, and (2) expanding the Fellows' ability to learn from each other and reach consensus.

## **The Effect of Transitions on Access to Higher Education**

An essential question regarding higher education participation is how transitions within and among education systems affect access. For this issue brief, case studies from the Netherlands, South Africa, Ukraine, and the United States provide a diverse palette for demonstrating how these issues differ among countries. Increasing access to higher education depends on the history of the country and its relative stage of development, its primary and secondary educational system, demographics, various opportunities offered to pupils, the legal framework, and the policy initiatives taken.

The Fellows who wrote this issue brief came to believe that access to quality education should be the crucial focus of policy. They note that there is a difference between simple participation (which implies that institutions are open to all) and “access with success” (which implies that once students have been accepted, they should be able to complete a degree). The latter depends on the whole educational system. The authors concluded that regardless of the level of economic development, all countries face transition issues that impede access. These issues don't go away, although they may change shape over time.

## **Privatization in Higher Education: Cross-Country Analysis of Trends, Policies, Problems, and Solutions**

Another team of Fellows decided to explore the experience of four countries with privatization, including the development and expansion of private institutions, increased reliance of public institutions on private funding, and the operation of colleges and universities in a businesslike manner. The countries—Brazil, Mongolia, the Netherlands, and Ukraine—and their various experiences illustrate different aspects of privatization to reveal common problems and how these problems are being addressed.

For example, some of the countries have more regulation of the private sector than others, and the role of the private sector in access varies quite a bit. The perception of the private sector often is entangled with concerns about “access to what?” Across the four countries, the authors found that common aspects of privatization included quality assurance, financial aid, and the new role of entrepreneurship. They concluded that privatization is not bad in itself, but it can have positive or negative consequences that derive from national policy and global trends. Although countries differ in the importance of privatization, it

---

<sup>2</sup> The papers are available at: <http://www.ihep.org/programs/global-policy-fellows.cfm>.

*We agreed that our first step was to understand the national differences and, after that, we could compare and organize recommendations.*

*Our cross-national team works quite efficiently. The meeting in [South Africa] helped to clarify and systematize our work and, as a result, we got [an] interesting paper.*

occurs to some degree in all countries, so its growing significance in higher education must be acknowledged globally.

### **Educational Policies for Integrating College Competencies and Workforce Needs**

In a global economy, it is increasingly important to understand how higher education intersects with workforce needs. One team of Fellows decided to analyze whether Brazil, Mongolia, Ukraine, and the United States are preparing their college graduates with the competencies and skills they will need to compete in a dynamic economic, political, and social context. They researched how the countries are addressing three specific facets of the challenges in workforce development: basic skills development, internships, and stakeholders. Several themes emerged, ranging from a general lack of agreement among key stakeholders regarding desired workforce competencies to balancing the demand for specialized technical training with the need for universal basic and applied academic skills. The Fellows who wrote the issue brief favored a greater focus on learning outcomes and basic skills, including the “soft” skills that are necessary for effective careers, including the ability to think creatively and work collaboratively. The authors made a number of suggestions for both developed and developing countries that are attempting to satisfy evolving labor market demands.

### **Financing Higher Education: A Myriad of Problems, A Myriad of Solutions**

Another team of Fellows explored the role of financing trends in college access and success. They used a multicountry perspective spanning the United States, Mongolia, South Africa, and Ukraine to highlight a number of strategies and challenges related to the creation and implementation of suitable higher education finance policies. In some countries, the policies focus on providing funding to institutions; other countries finance

education through benefits directly to students. More often than not, both types of policies are used to help students gain equal access to higher education. The success of these strategies varies widely.

The Fellows who wrote the issue brief believe that a key ingredient in finance policies is the relationship between power and the control of resources. A critical dialogue among policymakers, civil society, and political administrators is essential to create a sustainable framework within which policy can emerge. Then the financial and political resources must be available to ensure effective implementation. Throughout the process, policymakers must consider potential threats that could undermine effective implementation. In some countries, the political system is relatively stable and strong, but many countries are experiencing rapid expansion across multiple sectors or even a change to a completely new form of government.

### **Common threads**

Each of the cross-national teams worked to together on a topic related to higher education policy on which they may or may not have had previous knowledge. But all teams came to similar conclusions in their work. Most importantly, the problems or barriers faced by the countries are often similar—though by different degrees—while the solutions may be quite different and are highly dependent on the current policies, structures, stakeholders, and resources of each country. Nonetheless, while the details differed, many of the recommended policies offered the same tools, including new ways to target financial aid, changing definitions of disadvantage, and the balance between increasing enrollment and the quality of coursework. ☞



# Discussion of Policy Models

Around the world, countries face many similar challenges in improving access to higher education, but differences exist in how disadvantage is defined, the extent of policies that address historically disadvantaged populations, and how new policy ideas might be implemented. In many cases, the particular issues that may affect the success of access policies are quite different.

For the second phase of the program, the Fellows collaborated with colleagues from their own country to explore how various trends affect their country's higher education system and population, and what kinds of policies exist (or do not exist) to address the impact of these trends. Each team identified at least one policy intervention or implementation change that could improve access for underserved populations.<sup>3</sup>

## **Brazil**

The Brazilian team focused on improving access through distance learning. There is significant demand for higher education that is not being met by the existing system. This is especially true for disadvantaged groups. Distance learning may help address this situation, but there are risks involved, including decreased quality, faculty resistance, and continued stratification of society.

The team identified and analyzed the structure of the Brazilian Department of Distance Education, the available data on distance education, and the range of current government initiatives. The government recently launched a new Plan for the Development of Education, of which distance learning is considered to be an important piece. The government has created a structure for supervision and approved accreditation of distance education

courses. A consortium of several public institutions created the Open University of Brazil and the new Open Technical School System of Brazil.

However, the Brazilian team sees several negative aspects to the initiative, including a high level of regulation, the concentration of courses in the most developed states, low infrastructure and technology support in poor areas, low quality of course materials, and the fact that public opinion associates distance learning with low quality. The team made a number of recommendations to remedy these problems, including integration with policies on digital inclusion and enhancement of hybrid learning methodologies. The next steps for the team include meetings with various stakeholders, writing a more extensive document regarding quality improvement in distance learning, and organizing a forum to discuss these issues.

## **Mongolia**

The Mongolian team focused on a number of specific issues, including the student financial aid and the special accommodations given to civil servants. They discussed the limitations of

---

<sup>3</sup> Many of the presentations made about these policy models are available at: <http://www.ihep.org/gpfcountrypolicymodels.cfm>.

*The most important achievement for me... was the confirmation that the implementation is the harder part of making a policy.*

the State Training Fund, which was established in 1993 after the introduction of tuition fees. The STF provides financial assistance—loans, scholarships, and grants—based on a number of detailed criteria, which often target low-income or otherwise disadvantaged families as well as students with high academic merit. It also provides funding for students from government employee families, which is a policy that team members feel is a negative. The Mongolian team noted that there are related issues of equity, political will, and resistance from beneficiaries. Team members provided recommendations for ways to change this policy, including roundtables with stakeholders, advocacy activities by NGOs, and promotion of awareness in the media.

Members of the Mongolian team have taken several steps to further their policy recommendations. For example, one member presented at a number of conferences. Another tried to organize a policy think tank, but realized that it would have to be done incrementally. She has continued speaking with parents, students, university administrators, and policymakers; she believes that, in Mongolia, ordinary people will be more likely than policymakers to support these policies, so working through mechanisms such as the media may be more effective.

### **The Netherlands**

Key access issues in the Netherlands include differences between immigrant and nonimmigrant populations, the increased enrollment of older students, and the tracking system. Working within the European Qualification Framework to address the shortage of highly skilled workers throughout Europe, the Dutch government is attempting to increase its knowledge-based economy. It recognizes the importance of including immigrant populations

and nontraditional students. The team for the Netherlands took on two policy ideas related to lifelong learning and working.

One way to address these issues is to use lifelong learning and valuation of prior learning (VPL), which involves assessing personal competencies, offering a personal development strategy, and creating a “learning triangle” among the individual, the organization, and the learning system. VPL can help many dropouts return to study and successfully complete a degree. One team member followed up this idea with a poster at several international conferences, meetings with an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC) expert, and an audit visit with the Netherlands Quality Agency.

The Dutch Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment have initiated an interdepartmental Project for Learning and Working (PLW). The goal is to stimulate lifelong learning through programs that provide information to citizens and employers and to identify innovative initiatives regarding lifelong learning. Toward these ends, another team member set up a roundtable session on the importance of adult learning and the role of the government. She also set up “speed dates” for policymakers in the two departments at different educational levels, with the goal of creating a network of professionals interested in these issues.

### **South Africa**

The South African team members believe that while their country has plenty of policies to address access and success, the crucial problem is implementation. The major challenge is that education policy (as prescribed by the government after the end of

*We learned a lot from other Fellows' presentations. Moreover, as a team, we had interesting and productive face-to-face discussions that clarified and systematized our work.*

apartheid) did not align with the reality “on the ground” in terms of resources and the skills to implement those policies.

The team catalogued all the policies that had been developed since the end of apartheid. In the area of higher education, policy development began in 1994; it went through a period of broad positioning before recommending specific policies to address gaps in access. However, the team found that the government underestimated the problem, did not offer specifics, and did not understand the lack of human capacity in terms of the skills necessary to implement the policies. The team believes that, although the policies are sound, applied research and evaluation are key to policy implementation. Team members are continuing to speak out in various contexts about the need for people with the skills to implement the government’s policy initiatives. In particular, one team member is working within his own institutions to change the way the department instructs students.

### **Ukraine**

In Ukraine, one of the most important issues facing the higher education system is the European Bologna Process. Ukraine joined in 2005 and is in the process of establishing clear goals and implementing a number of components of the process, such as the diploma supplement and the credit transfer system. Meanwhile, to combat corruption and ensure that Ukrainian students can compete globally in higher education, the country has introduced a nationwide testing system. New admission rules will be established in 2009, but continuing legislation will be needed.

Currently, a number of sources are available to get information on the new system, including government phone hotlines,

websites with information on universities, and online external testing information. However, rural areas have a low level of Internet access, and the new system has no objective ratings and has had little public discussion. The team believes that the government should establish an independent rating commission and independent higher education research centers, and should increase access to the Internet and other technological advances. The team believes that a number of policy innovations would help address the problems in Ukraine. These include the establishment of vouchers for students, more university autonomy, and changes in the existing testing system.

One team member has already started to implement the team’s recommendations on his university’s faculty by forming a faculty advisory board. One of the issues the board will be involved in is the ongoing adjustment of the curricula to align with job market needs.

Another team member changed his job to one that matched the goals of the program, and now has direct input in policy-making through a draft admission policy for the government (which was implemented) and continuing input on the national testing system.


### **United States**

The U.S. team examined whether social stratification in postsecondary destinations has increased over time. Using data from several national longitudinal data sets, they were able to show the educational gaps for disadvantaged groups in an easy-to-understand format and describe how the composition of student bodies varies dramatically according to the selectivity of certain institutions in a state.

The team recommended that at the least, it is essential to increase awareness of the problem among policymakers and institutional leaders. One team member used the data in the state governor's office to illustrate gaps in the state's higher education system.

In the future, team members will promote several policies: improving the equity among students at selective institutions by improving information, targeting low-income high schools and training guidance counselors; and expanding enrollment at selective institutions and improving nonselective institutions.

### Common findings

Despite the range of policy models offered by the Fellows, in such areas as distance learning, admissions testing, and life-long learning, there were a number of common findings that Fellows will bring back with them after the program. All of the teams were trying to address some facet of policy that impacts disadvantaged populations in their home country. In addition, all teams described the way in which they will be able to use data to make their case, even when that case is the need for more data. Fellows anticipated challenges in promoting their ideas, and were able to identify the key stakeholders they would need to reach in order to effect change. 

# Lessons Learned from the Global Policy Fellows

The Global Policy Fellows Program was the first of its kind to target early career professionals who desired to have an impact on policy and improve access and success in higher education. All the Fellows gained knowledge and skills in a number of areas, and they are now part of a network of analysts who will continue to work in this area in the future.

The program was based on the theory of “learning by doing.” The Fellows were guided and supported but also encouraged to find solutions to challenges on their own. Through this process, the Fellows had many positive experiences that can serve as a model for future programs. They gained a broad base of knowledge, expanded their networks and relationships with colleagues in their own and other countries, and had experiences that will help them further their careers or, in some cases, change professional direction.

## **Knowledge Building**

The Fellows varied in their backgrounds in policy development and in the topics they explored during the program. However, all of them improved their knowledge base at a variety of levels. They learned about other countries and issues in higher education, and how to find commonalities even in systems that look very different from each other. Several Fellows said they ended the program understanding their own country better than when they started. A majority said that the program improved their ability to see other viewpoints and importance of understanding context in order to inform policy. They increased their under-

standing of the advantages of a comparative perspective and how it can impact policy. The importance of understanding various contexts was particularly mentioned by the Fellows as a key experience that they will bring back from the program.

The Fellows also gained insight into policymaking and learned how to develop a coherent, informative document into a collaborative context. Just as important, several Fellows expressed that the program boosted their confidence and increased their willingness to exchange ideas, especially through the process of learning by doing. Clearly, this type of program can play an important role in building a knowledge base for rising policy analysts.

## **Professional Networks**

One of the important goals of a program that targets network-building is to link participants in a sustainable way. All the Global Policy Fellows agreed emphatically that the program enabled them to build strong relationships and expand their networks worldwide. They appreciated the extended opportunities to meet in informal settings and the time away from their busy lives to

*The program gave me a global perspective to our local problems. This is the most important facet of the program...furthermore, the program gave me a wonderful opportunity to build a global network...this gives you a great advantage.*

*Our group was wonderful, all of us were always in touch, and we were always on time as per our targets.*

talk with people from very different backgrounds who care about higher education access and success. The Fellows expressed a desire to continue these relationships through Facebook, the expanded IHEP website, Webcenter, LinkedIn, and other resources. These results validate the importance of building time and activities for personal discussion into the program.

### **Applicability to Future Work**

Another goal of the program was to expand interest in higher education policy, especially policy that targets disadvantaged populations. After the program, the Fellows expressed strong interest in international education issues and were eager to start or continue work as policy analysts. They said their involvement in challenging activities provided opportunities for growth and learning. Some Fellows are well placed to make contacts with policymakers in government or on campus to broach or test their ideas; others are applying for work in new areas in which they can have an impact on policy.

### **Program Structure**

Many formats can be used for collaborative work; the Global Policy Fellows Program used a series of meetings and structured activities between the meetings to focus on collaborative policy research and policy development. The Fellows generally enjoyed the format of the program and understood the goals of each component. They enjoyed the general presentations and the opportunity to learn from experts from a variety of backgrounds

as well as group activities such as brainstorming, assignments, and team activities. A number of Fellows mentioned the usefulness of feedback from their colleagues in crafting storylines for their issue briefs, and of the exercises facilitated by staff that allowed them to consider and prioritize policy changes. Some Fellows mentioned that the chats on the IHEP Webcenter were a great forum, full of ideas and exchanges. A few Fellows made the point that although it was sometimes difficult to come to consensus while writing a paper as a team, these differences often yielded interesting socio-cultural explanations. Again, all Fellows praised the time built into the program to talk with one another and with staff, both formally and informally.

The GPFM attempted to illustrate some possibilities for cross-national collaboration, with all its challenges and rewards. As with any program of this nature, there were challenges. In this case, they centered around communication, composition of teams, different capacities in background knowledge and language ability, and program expectations. To some extent, these challenges were planned, so participants could develop the art of compromise, collaboration, and team-building in an international setting. The ways Fellows met these challenges are instructive for the development of future programs.

### **Program Expectations**

Overall, Fellows enjoyed the various activities of the program, but some unexpected problems arose. Given work schedules and

*Coming to common ground with the view of the paper took a number of discussions and chats. Getting all group members to participate timely and fully in writing and discussions was a challenge. Sometimes explaining my own point and understanding the points of the other group members was a challenge. We had to paraphrase and argue about our ideas.*

other commitments, the topical issue briefs took much longer to complete than anticipated. The Fellows enjoyed collaborating, but some found it difficult to conceptualize an idea for an issue brief that worked for everyone on the team or to find a coherent thread that all could follow. In the second phase, some Fellows had difficulty making connections at the government level. Others wished that money were available to continue their efforts over a longer period. These experiences suggest that similar programs should be realistic concerning their activities and resources, and about providing sufficient support to guide participants throughout the process.

### **Team Composition and Knowledge**

Working in teams is an important part of collaborative work; however, it can be hard to strike the right balance in collaboration. The GPPF teams generally worked well together, but some had an easier time than others. Some Fellows took on leadership roles that entailed more work, while other team members were difficult to contact or contributed less to the issue brief or policy model. Teams that had a native English speaker often counted on that person to edit issue briefs and lead discus-

sions. It can be difficult to make team members accountable, and some absences due to personal or work priorities could not be avoided.

Related to their ability to work in teams is the fact that Fellows can vary widely in their preparation for the program. The application process attempted to ensure that none of the Fellows were starting from scratch, but a few of them did not have a solid enough base of knowledge about policy development to get the most out of the program, and some knew nothing about the paper topic they were assigned. While some of these difficulties fit in with the program's goal of "learning by doing," they also contributed to longer time lines than originally anticipated. Future programs should balance the goal of having a mix of participants from diverse backgrounds with the practical need to complete program activities on time.

Ultimately, most Fellows said that the different backgrounds of team members brought both challenges and opportunities.



*The strategy we adopted at the outset was to open our hearts and minds to dialogue about different experiences. Despite the fact that commonalities emerged in our separate contexts, it was not that easy working on policy research. This was largely due to significant contextual differences and possibly also due to our different perspectives.*

*While I have personally learned a great deal from working on the cross-national paper, I'm not sure if the final product will meet my expectations. The level of commitment, expertise, and writing ability varies tremendously in my group.*

## **Communication**

In a program that stresses global collaboration, communication tools and reliable technology are essential. The experience of the GPF program has been mixed and highlights the importance of training on whatever technology is being used. At the beginning of the program, several teams had problems with the Webcenter tool and turned to other communication mechanisms, such as e-mail, wikis, Skype, and teleconferencing. Although use of the Webcenter improved over the course of the program, it was clear that the Fellows varied widely in their ability to use technology.

## **Thoughts for Future Programs**

Many programs exist for academic exchange but very few for policymakers at the government level, or for those who are interested in policy work. Programs such as this one are a valuable resource for building a new base of policy analysts who can help improve access and success in higher education. The 2007–09 Global Policy Fellows were enthusiastic about sharing their experience and made a number of suggestions for programs that bring together a mix of participants with the goal of developing skills in policy development:

- Participants should come in with a foundational knowledge base and a willingness to prepare papers and presentations. Staff should provide strong advice and materials on who will do policy research and implementation.
- Participants should be open to other cultures and flexible about ways of working together. They should not rush to judgment or jump to conclusions, but should take the time to fully explore all points of view. Participants should approach the challenge with an open heart and mind, and be willing to share and learn.
- Participants should not try to solve all existing problems; rather, they should concentrate on certain issues on which to provide detailed policy advice.
- The program should recruit a diverse mix of people from different backgrounds, and should bring in experts from both academic and policy/government backgrounds. ☞

# Framework for Policy Collaboration

The Global Policy Fellows Program provides a model for cultivating and nurturing a network of people who are interested in higher educational policy. The Fellows' experiences in the program illustrate a number of important principles that can make such collaboration effective:

## **1. The program should use a combination of cross-national and in-country activities.**

International collaboration, whether on a publication or other activity, is excellent experience that participants can take with them into their careers. In a program targeted to policy development, participants will benefit greatly if they can apply the policy development and analysis activities to their own country. One way to accomplish this is to include a few participants from each country represented and then provide a framework of activities that encourage creative thinking and concrete ideas they can take home at the end of the program.

## **2. Meetings should be hosted in a variety of contexts and should take advantage of in-country assistance, including experts.**

International collaborations involve building a base of knowledge and understanding about how countries or regions differ in historical, educational, financial, structural, and other contexts. Program meetings should be held in various locations to reap the most benefits and to enable program staff to recruit experts from widely differing backgrounds.

## **3. The program should encourage the use of a variety of resources and activities to analyze and develop policy.**

A program can foster expertise in policy development in a variety of ways. Through collaborations on policy research, participants can learn how to write in a clear, user-friendly way in order to reach institutional and governmental policy leaders. They can learn the importance of brevity and the best way to

structure a document to get a message across. Participants can brainstorm about policies in their own countries and refine their ideas through mutual feedback. The feedback can also take place in person or through online mechanisms such as chats and discussion forums. All resources and activities should be actively guided by program staff or consultants with expertise in relevant areas.

## **4. Participants should have some knowledge or experience in policy development; these tools can be reinforced early in the program.**

Programs that target people who are in the early stages of their careers need to ensure that participants have enough knowledge to benefit fully from the activities. Materials can be provided before the program starts, and it is important to be clear about what participants must commit to during the program. While it is useful to bring in local experts at the first meeting, it may be even more important to offer some hands-on training workshops.

## **5. Staff must ensure that teams of participants reflect a balance of backgrounds and that team leaders are supported.**

In a successful networking program, participants will meet and develop relationships with others who can share different skills and knowledge. To generate the most impact, program staff should carefully consider the dynamics among team members. Each team should have strong leaders to ensure that the collaborative work moves forward in a timely and productive manner. Staff should support those leaders with extra resources, including financial resources when possible. Staff should always

consider participants' differing approaches to problem-solving and presentation.

#### **6. Learning by doing is effective, but regular check-ins and staff interventions are necessary to keep the process on track.**

Simply describing international collaboration and policy development is not enough—the experience must be ingrained so it lasts after the program ends. Participants should be allowed to work through challenges; however, collaboration can bog down as a result of participants' different schedules, knowledge, and interests and learning styles. It is important to establish a firm schedule and mechanisms to help the process move along.

#### **7. Communication tools must be varied, effective, and clearly explained.**

In a program that promotes international collaboration, communication is crucial. Ideally, all participants will use the same communication tool. However, this may not be possible in some circumstances, so there should be flexibility in determining the best alternative ways to communicate within the team and with program staff.


#### **8. Availability of data and other information can be both a challenge and a learning opportunity.**

Data-driven policymaking is essential in any context. Clear evidence is needed to inform the process and the individual stakeholders. However, in many cases existing data are not applicable to the issue at hand, or do not exist at all. This lack can present a serious obstacle to the kind of research and analysis

that is necessary to inform policy. At the same time, there is an opportunity to raise the consciousness of participants about the value of data and the need to push for more and better data collection.

#### **9. Peer feedback is an important component of collaborative writing.**

Resources and knowledge of staff and outside experts are invaluable to a program that encourages collaboration among people with very different backgrounds. Interaction with peers is equally important, as participants stand to gain the most from each other. The program should be set up to include numerous opportunities for both structured and unstructured group interactions.

Programs such as these also benefit the organizations that manage them. Through the Global Policy Fellows program, IHEP has extended its already considerable understanding of the field of higher education policy research with additional ways to look at policy development practices. This program is just the beginning. There are many ways to help individuals, and groups of individuals, frame policy issues, collect data, analyze data, and present findings to government and other stakeholders. New programs can narrow their focus by region, topic, or audience; they can target policymakers or those who are interested in influencing them. The need for highly skilled experts in policy development is growing, and many countries would profit from the experience. Ultimately, as the global community becomes closer, the development of a new cadre of these experts in the field of higher education policy will have long-term impacts for the future. 

# Appendix A

*Global Fellows 2007–09<sup>4</sup>*

## **Brazil**

Denilde Oliveira Holzacker  
São Marcos University

Eufrasio Farias Prates  
Association Internacional de Educacion Continuada (AIEC)

## **Mongolia**

Munkh-Erdene Lkhamsuren  
National University of Mongolia

Batjargal Batkhuyag  
Mongolian Education Alliance

Khishigbuyan Dayan-Ochir  
World Bank and the Mongolian Ministry of Education, Culture,  
and Science

## **Netherlands**

Demet Yazilitas  
Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science

Leon Cremonini  
Center for Higher Education Policy Studies

## **South Africa**

Mankolo Xaverine Mfusi  
University of Pretoria

Rudi Kimmie  
UNITE/University of KwaZulu-Natal

## **Ukraine**

Yaroslav Prytula  
Lviv Ivan Franko National University

Olena Chornoivan  
Consortium of Pedagogical Academy and Kirovograd  
Institute of Commerce

Nataliya Dromina-Voloc  
Kyiv University of Law and Economics KROK

Alexander Belyakov  
Teritoria. Stalyrozvytok (The Territory. Sustainable Development)

## **United States**

Michael Bastedo  
University of Michigan

Michelle Asha Cooper  
Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance

Jennifer Rippner  
Office of Governor Sonny Perdue, Georgia

---

<sup>4</sup> These are the Fellows' position at the time of application; several Fellows have changed positions since then.

# Appendix B

*Expert Speakers at Global Policy Fellows Program Meetings*

## **Washington, D.C.**

**August 22–25, 2007**

Laura Slover, *Achieve, Inc.*

Jamil Salmi, *World Bank*

Judith Eaton, *Council for Higher Education Accreditation*

Pamela Marcucci, *SUNY Buffalo Center for Comparative and Global Studies*

Patrick Leahy, *International Finance Corporation*

## **Cape Town and Pretoria, South Africa**

**January 22–31, 2008**

Jan Persens, *University of the Western Cape*

Nico Cloete, *Center for Higher Education Transformation*

Nasima Badsha, *Ministry of Higher Education*

Nan Yeld, *University of Cape Town*

Michelle Buchler, *Centre for Education Policy Development*

Chika Sehoole, *Ministry of Education*

Venitha Pillay, *University of Pretoria*

## **Bellagio, Italy**

**August 15–22, 2008**

Martin Unger, *Institute for Advanced Studies*

# Appendix C

*Global Policy Fellows Program Advisory Committee*

Lidia Brito, former minister of higher education, science, and technology, Mozambique

Maurits van Rooijen, deputy vice chancellor, University of Westminster, and Executive Committee member, European Access Network

Patti Peterson, president, Council for International Exchange of Scholars (now IHEP senior associate), United States

Jamil Salmi, coordinator, Tertiary Education Work Group, The World Bank

Simon Schwartzman, director, Institute of Studies on Work and Society, Brazil

Hong Shen, professor, Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China







**INSTITUTE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**  
1320 19th Street, NW, Suite 400  
Washington, DC 20036

202 861 8223 **TELEPHONE**  
202 861 9307 **FACSIMILE**  
[www.ihep.org](http://www.ihep.org) **WEB**

## **FORD FOUNDATION**

**FORD FOUNDATION**  
320 East 43rd Street  
New York, NY 10017

212 573 5000 **TELEPHONE**  
212 351 3677 **FACSIMILE**  
[www.fordfound.org](http://www.fordfound.org) **WEB**

GIRP01200906