

Ambassadors

Students Building Foundations for a more Peaceful World

NICHOLAS FITZHUGH

Conflict and inequality are growing overseas, and anti-American sentiment is growing with them. It is imperative that the United States reverse anti-Americanism while leading efforts to resolve the challenges facing the members of our global family. Failure will result in stronger isolationism, nationalism and extremism around the world. As in other matters, New England institutions of higher education must play a leadership role.

The seriousness of our current state of affairs could hardly be clearer. A recent survey of 350 returning study abroad students conducted by the Glimpse Foundation found that 37 percent felt discriminated against because of their identity as Americans, and 13 percent actually felt threatened because of their nationality.

The recent *Global Competence & National Needs* report published by the Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program begins with the following statement: "What nations don't know can hurt them. The stakes involved in study abroad are that simple, that straightforward, and that important. For their own future and that of the nation, college graduates today must be internationally competent."

We are fortunate that the institution of "study abroad" is growing in popularity. It's one of the best ways to provide students with the knowledge and tools they'll need to effectively mediate conflict and rapidly and compassionately respond to global crises. Furthermore, study abroad students serve as *de facto* ambassadors for the United States while they're abroad, helping to explain our policies, politics and culture, and showing that there is often a difference between official America and Americans. More than half the respondents to the Glimpse survey said that most locals who expressed negative attitudes towards and strengthen the United States differentiated between the American people and the American government.

As study abroad student Gillian Horton of the College of William and Mary said: "I found that most anti-American sentiment diminished when I sat down and talked to people. Most individuals did not hold my nationality against me. It is also much easier to hate or hold negative stereotypes regarding a stranger; people who might purport to dislike America or Americans in general have trouble applying these prejudices face-to-face, on an individual basis."

Collegiate study abroad participation has grown by 20 percent since academic year 2000-01 to the

point where postsecondary institutions are now sending about 200,000 students abroad each year. But this is still a very small portion of the nation's 14 million college students.

To reduce global anti-American sentiment while leading efforts to resolve the challenges facing our global family, we must devote additional institutional resources to increasing study abroad participation and enhancing its value. We must also devote more resources to leveraging the knowledge garnered by those who study abroad and their enthusiasm for it. This will serve to open the eyes and minds of those who have not shared their experiences and inspire ever-more students to study abroad.

To attain these goals, I recommend the following:

- Help push the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship proposal through Congress to support the goal of having 1 million students studying abroad by 2017.
- Initiate study abroad scholarship or fellowship programs in conjunction with or independent of the Lincoln Fellowships.
- Make study abroad a required part of colleges' curricula.
- Impose the same high standards that define on-campus courses to study abroad programming.
- Develop a strategy to incorporate international education materials into courses.
- Develop a strategy that will take advantage of what returning study abroad students have experienced and learned in order to teach and inspire prospective study abroad students.

Despite our small size, Glimpse is doing its part to help. The foundation works with 70 colleges to provide forums for sharing the experiences of young adults living and studying abroad. For the past five years, Glimpse has published a quarterly magazine, called *Glimpse Quarterly*, which features articles about personal cultural experiences written by young adults living or studying abroad. Glimpse has also managed a website (GlimpseAbroad.org) dedicated to helping young adults prepare for and get the most out of their abroad experiences.

To date, Glimpse has worked indirectly to encourage study abroad participation and enhance its value. In 2007, the foundation plans to develop a new program called Glimpse Fellowships to more directly strengthen study abroad. The program will be launched, subject to funding, in 2008. Our hope is to maximize the scope, impact and quality of Glimpse Fellowships by: a) partnering with the best program providers in the industry, b) calling on these partners to match our charitable dollars with their own, and c) defining a sub-curriculum for fellows that will allow us to take advantage of what they learn and what

they experience for the benefit of those who are not able to study abroad.

Inspiring and developing new global perspectives that help us see one another as members of the same family should be the educational priority of the 21st century. We all must do our part to rise to this challenge.

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Immigrant Education

Don't Forget the 1.4 Million Global Assets in New England's Backyard

MARCIA DREW HOHN

Many people in higher education are concerned about the declining numbers of foreign students attending New England colleges and universities. Restrictions on student visas since the September 11 terrorist attacks along with increasing competition from higher education institutions across the country and around the globe have both contributed to the decline. While New England higher education and economic leaders work to re-assert the region's magnetism abroad, they should refocus on the educational status of the 1.4 million foreign immigrants who already call New England home.

Foreign-born immigrants represent more than 10 percent of New England's population. According to a 2004 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, immigration is driving the region's population growth and profoundly affecting the region's economic and demographic character. The same Boston Fed report provides some important New England data gleaned from the 2000 census.

- New England immigrants differ from the foreign-born population in the United States overall. Nationally, more than half of immigrants are from Latin America, and 70 percent of that group comes from Central America or Mexico. In New England, by contrast, 34 percent of immigrants are from Europe, 30 percent from Latin America and 23 percent from Asia, with the remainder from Africa (5 percent) and Canada (7 percent). A large percentage of New England's Latin American immigrants are from the Caribbean, followed by South America and Central America.

- Most New England immigrants live in urban areas with many settling in areas of ethnic concentration. Massachusetts is home to 56 percent of the region's foreign-born residents, followed by Connecticut with 27 percent and Rhode Island with 9 percent. Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont have much smaller but rapidly growing immigrant populations.

Before New England colleges and universities—and employers—put all their efforts into recruiting talent from abroad, they should think about the immigrants already here in New England.

- Educational attainment among New England immigrants is high. Seventy percent have high school diplomas, 30 percent have college degrees, and 14 percent have advanced degrees. Recent immigrants claim even higher educational attainment, surpassing that of the native population. Highly educated immigrants are likely to be trained in high-demand fields such as computer science, mathematics, architecture, engineering and life and physical sciences. But many of these professionally trained people cannot attain the credentials they need to practice their occupations in the United States.

- Median household income among New England immigrants was \$42,900 in 2000—13 percent lower than the native population. Nearly a third of New England's immigrant households fall in the lowest income quartile of all New England households.

Vital to economy

Recent studies have extolled the importance of immigrants to both the U.S. and New England economies. Five hundred-plus economists and scholars signed a recent letter to President Bush and Congress from the Independent Institute pointing out that immigration yields skills, capital, lower costs and entrepreneurship, and hailing immigration as “the greatest anti-poverty program ever devised.”

Studies by Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies have documented how Massachusetts and other Northeast states have become dependent on foreign immigration for population growth. The Northeastern research suggests that the Massachusetts labor force would actually have shrunk during the 1990s without immigrant labor. But as the Fed's household income figures reveal, the importance of immigration to the regional economy has not translated into economic success for the immigrants themselves.

Speaking English

The first step to economic success for New England's immigrants is to obtain enough fluency in English to