

COALITION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Promoting U.S. Global Competence

April 19, 2011

The Honorable Arne Duncan
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary Duncan:

The undersigned organizations of the Coalition for International Education write with deep concern over reports of a severe, \$50 million or 40% cut to the Department of Education's International Education and Foreign Language Studies programs—Title VI and Fulbright-Hays—in the final FY 2011 Continuing Resolution agreement. The Coalition is a group of over 30 organizations with interest in promoting U.S. global competence, and in particular the Department of Education's international education programs.

We recognize the difficult decisions faced on education spending cuts for the remainder of FY 2011, and the upcoming FY 2012 deliberations. Under H.R. 1473, it is our understanding that you have discretion to decide final funding levels for programs not specifically cited for cuts in the bill, such is the case for Title VI and Fulbright-Hays. It is our hope that you will have the latitude to administer these education cuts proportionately and equitably.

In making these tough choices, we urge your consideration of the important federal role played by international and foreign language education programs in supporting our nation's long-term national security, global leadership, economic competitiveness, as well as mutual understanding and collaboration around the world. Successful U.S. engagement in these areas, at home or abroad, relies on Americans with global competence, including foreign language skills and the ability to understand and function in different cultural environments.

Unfortunately, as a number of reports and Congressional hearings over the last decade have demonstrated, the number of Americans with these skills and expertise does not match our growing strategic needs at home or abroad. As the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) reported in 2007: ***“A pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages in this country threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce an informed citizenry.”***

The U.S. has fallen behind other nations in STEM indicators, but historically has never caught up with other nations in language and cultural skills. Now more than ever, our nation's students must have access to a high-quality international education and skills-training needed to compete and collaborate in the rapidly changing global economy.

“Title VI/Fulbright-Hays serve as our nation’s foundational programs for building U.S. global competence.” (NAS) They are the federal government’s most comprehensive programs supporting the development of high quality ***national capacity*** in international, foreign language and business education and research, utilized by education, government and business sectors. Title VI/Fulbright programs support activities to strengthen our capabilities throughout the educational pipeline, from K-12 outreach through graduate education and advanced research. Grantees engage in extensive outreach and collaboration across the educational spectrum, and with business, government, the media and the general public. Over the last two decades Congress has adjusted and expanded programs and priorities to reflect a rapidly changing world, moving beyond Cold-War needs to adapt to the challenges of the 21st century.

From producing graduates such as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, General John Abizaid, former Ambassador to Russia James Collins, advisor to six Secretaries of State Aaron David Miller, *NYTimes* Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Anthony Shadid, to supporting the President’s Export Initiative through training of small and mid-size businesses to engage in emerging markets and create jobs, this federal-higher education partnership pays dividends that vastly outweigh the small 0.2% investment within the Department of Education’s budget.

Most of these university-based programs would be eliminated without Title VI/Fulbright support, especially when state and local governments and institutions of higher education also are financially strapped. Significantly cutting programs in this carefully designed “program pipeline” would seriously weaken our nation’s international education capacity, which has taken decades to build and would be impossible to easily recapture.

After September 11, 2001, Congress began a decade of enhancements to Title VI/Fulbright-Hays because of the sudden awareness of an urgent need to enhance the nation’s in-depth knowledge of world areas, transnational issues and fluency of U.S. citizens in foreign languages. A 40% cut now would eliminate the gains made since FY 2002, and in turn have an adverse long-term impact on our national interests.

In developing your spending plan for the remainder of FY 2011, it is our hope that you will provide the maximum amount possible for these programs. We request a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss the Department’s priorities on international and foreign language education. Your staff may feel free to contact Miriam A. Kazanjian, Consultant to the Coalition for International Education (makazanjian@earthlink.net) to schedule a meeting.

Thank you for your consideration of our views and for your support of international and foreign language education.

Submitted by the following organizations:

African Studies Association
Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange
American Anthropological Association
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages
American Council on Education
American Councils for International Education: ACTR/ACCELS

American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
American Historical Association
American Political Science Association
American University of Beirut
American Folklore Association
Archaeological Institute of America
Asia Society
Association of American Geographers
Association of American Universities
Association of Art Museum Directors
Association of International Education Administrators
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Association for Asian Studies
Association for International Business Education and Research
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies
Consortium of Social Science Associations
Council of American Overseas Research Centers
Council of Directors of National Foreign Language Resource Centers
Council of Directors of National Resource Centers
Council of Graduate Schools
The Forum on Education Abroad
German Studies Association
Joint National Committee for Languages
Latin American Studies Association
Middle East Studies Association
Modern Language Association
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
National Council for the Social Studies
National Humanities Alliance
North American Small Business International Trade Educators Association
Rural Sociological Society
Social Science Research Council
UNCF Special Programs

cc: Undersecretary Martha Kanter
Assistant Secretary Eduardo Ochoa
Assistant Secretary Carmel Martin
Deputy Assistant Secretary Andre Lewis
Assistant to the President for Education Roberto Rodriguez, WH DPC
Senior Advisor for Education Zakiya Smith, WH DPC