

# Sharpening Our Edge: Enhancing U.S. Competitiveness THROUGH STUDY ABROAD AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE AND AREA STUDIES

**Nearly three-quarters of American college students want to study abroad.**<sup>1</sup> Yet only 10 percent<sup>2</sup> do so before they graduate, largely due to the real or perceived cost of studying abroad.<sup>3</sup> This hurts American competitiveness, workforce development, and global standing. Federal funding for study abroad and foreign language learning contributes to a more secure and prosperous United States.

## Studying Abroad Boosts U.S. Students' Success and Careers

More than **31 million job openings require skills that students can acquire from studying abroad**, such as leadership, problem-solving, communication, and time management.<sup>4</sup>

Students who study abroad show **meaningful, long-term improvements in their language skills** which can enhance their ability to communicate in international and multicultural settings.<sup>5</sup>

Four-year **graduation rates are 15 percent higher** for students who study abroad.<sup>6</sup>

## Global Experience Strengthens the U.S. Workforce and Economy

Studying abroad cultivates a **greater appreciation of American culture and values** and less fear of others.<sup>7</sup>

More than 85 percent of U.S. business leaders believe their **business would increase** if their employees had international experience.<sup>8</sup>

In the United States, **more than 41 million jobs are tied to international trade**, making foreign language and intercultural skills gained through study abroad more valuable.<sup>9</sup>

## Global Students Shape U.S. Business, Culture, and Government



**Robert Gates**

Former U.S. Secretary of Defense and  
Central Intelligence Agency Director



**Catherine "Cady" Coleman**

NASA Astronaut  
*high school exchange student in Norway*



**David Muir**

Journalist, ABC News  
*college semester abroad in Spain*



**Reed Hastings**

Founder and CEO, Netflix  
*Returned Peace Corps Volunteer*

# Sharpening Our Edge: Enhancing U.S. Competitiveness BY ATTRACTING AND RETAINING GLOBAL TALENT

**The best and brightest from around the world help fuel U.S. innovation and our economy despite comprising 6 percent of overall U.S. college enrollment.** International students and scholars provide domestic students with exposure to other countries and cultures — an essential component of career readiness in today's world. The national security, economic vitality, and workforce development of the United States will benefit from international students and scholars having streamlined visa processing and a pathway to a green card after graduation.

## International Students Strengthen the U.S. Economy



**One-quarter of U.S. start-up companies worth \$1B+**

have a founder who first came to the United States as an international student.<sup>1</sup>



International student enrollment contributed **\$42.9 billion** to the U.S. economy in the 2024 – 25 academic year.<sup>2</sup>



International student spending created or supported **355,736 U.S. jobs.** That's one job for every three international students.<sup>3</sup>

## Global Talent Helps Fuel American Innovation



**40% of U.S. Nobel Prize winners**

in chemistry, medicine, and physics since 2000 have been immigrants.<sup>4</sup>



42% of the founders of **top AI companies studied in the United States** as an international student.<sup>5</sup>



An international student invented the **technology that makes Zoom and FaceTime possible.**<sup>6</sup>

## Losing Talent Hurts America's Interests



A Turkish international student was unable to stay after graduation. He took his ideas to China, **enabling Huawei to lead in 5G technology and secure 10 times more patents** than its closest competitor.<sup>7</sup>



More than half of international students in the United States pursue STEM fields of study<sup>9</sup> and **70 percent of full-time graduate students in AI-related fields are international students.**<sup>10</sup>



**Not enough American students graduate with the STEM skills** needed to meet the demands of the 21st-century knowledge economy.<sup>8</sup>



Enrolling more international students leads to an increase in the number of STEM bachelor's degrees **awarded to U.S. students.**<sup>11</sup>