



**U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Private Sector Exchange**

July 22, 2013

Dear Exchange Visitor Program Sponsor:

For the past eighteen months, I have had the pleasure of serving as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) at the Department of State. My enthusiasm for the Exchange Visitor Program remains high and I am very proud of the accomplishments we have made in collaboration with the exchange community. Together we are ensuring the Exchange Visitor Program reaches its maximum potential as a cultural experience for participants and a valuable tool of U.S. foreign policy.

The Department, in cooperation with the sponsor community, is making vast improvements to more effectively and efficiently oversee exchange visitor programs. We restructured the Office of Private Sector Exchange and increased our staff capacity; examined categories of the Exchange Visitor Program and considered new regulations in various categories to strengthen our exchanges; developed and implemented tools to manage data more efficiently; increased our communication with sponsors and decreased our designation and sanctions backlogs; created exciting new alumni programs; and addressed vulnerabilities in some program categories to further enhance the health, safety, and welfare of our participants. An enormous success has been the establishment of our new Policy and Program Support Unit, headed by Kevin Saba, and our new Office of Program Administration, headed by Henry Scott. The biographies of Kevin and Henry, and all of our office directors are attached as an addendum to this letter.

As our newest improvements take hold, we must all remain mindful of the true purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program. In accordance with the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961, these cultural, educational and professional exchanges are intended to build mutual understanding between Americans and people of other countries. This is realized when exchange visitors become immersed in their host schools, families, workplaces, and communities, and learn something about this country they otherwise would not have learned. By bringing people together to share perspectives and experiences, we enable them to break down barriers, and our national security and prosperity are strengthened – at home and abroad.

As I frequently say to my team at the Department of State, this is the year to validate and showcase the success of our programs. The cross-cultural component of the Exchange Visitor Program experience is critical to the success of each individual exchange, and to the effectiveness of the Program. Through Exchange Visitor Program sponsor designation, you are entrusted to implement a cultural exchange program. Success in advancing U.S. public diplomacy goals, as all programs in the Exchange Visitor Program are intended to do, is best achieved through careful planning and execution of the cultural component of your exchange.

The cross-cultural component of your exchange visitor program gives your participants the opportunity to learn about U.S. society and culture outside of their placement; to learn about the local community in which they are placed; to share their own culture, traditions and views with Americans; and to appreciate similarities that bring people together. These are the goals of people-to-people exchanges and are the central reasons the Exchange Visitor Program exists.

Last month, we provided you with a guide on the goals of cultural programming, and examples of cultural activities to help sponsors consider how to engage Exchange Visitor Program participants and American host communities alike. As we suggested in the guide, we want to hear from the sponsor community about your cultural activities. We encourage you to send cross-cultural programming best practices to EVPbestpractices@state.gov.

The Department appreciates your commitment to international exchange and respects the work you do in support of our nation's public diplomacy efforts. Our partnership and combined commitment to the Exchange Visitor Program will help ensure that these programs continue to serve as an important component of the foreign policy mission of the United States.

With warm wishes,



Robin J. Lerner
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Private Sector Exchange

Enclosures:
As stated.

Susan Geary is the **Director of the Office of Exchange Coordination and Compliance**. She joined the U.S. Department of State in 2007 as the Deputy Director in the Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and became Director of the Office of Exchange Coordination and Compliance in 2009. Susan brings over 25 years of government experience. She served a wide variety of roles at the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) prior to accepting the Deputy Director position with the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) for the Department of Homeland Security in August 2003. Susan served as Director of SEVP from 2004 until 2007.

David Eckenrode is the **Director of the Office of Designation** and comes to the Department of State from Veterans Affairs. There, he oversaw the Center for Veterans Enterprise which manages the Veterans Small Business Verification program. Annually, that office evaluates the eligibility status of 13,000 applicants and participants desiring to compete for set-aside contracting opportunities as service-disabled Veteran-owned small businesses and Veteran-owned small businesses. Previously, he worked at the Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Office of External Communications and with the National Park Service as a Wilderness Ranger at Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. Prior to returning to Federal service in 2008, he worked in the private sector supporting U.S. Government initiatives in the Middle-East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia. After retiring from the U.S. Army, he attended North Carolina Central University where he obtained a Juris Doctor in 2001.

G. Kevin Saba currently serves as **Director of Policy and Program Support** for Private Sector Exchange. Immediately prior to joining EC, Kevin served as Senior Advisor for Strategic Planning within ECA. Kevin joined the Department of State in 2002 and was involved in the start-up of the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) then joining the MCC as its first Managing Director of Threshold Country Programs. Two years later he returned to State and assisted in the formation of the Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) and served as Regional Director for Global Partnerships. He also was involved in the start-up of the Department of Foreign Assistance (F) and served as co-chair of the public private partnership task force of the Secretary's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) process. Kevin was accredited in June 2008 by the Overseas Development Institute (the United Kingdom's leading think tank on international development) and the International Business Leaders Forum (an internationally recognized leader in cross-sector partnerships) as a professional broker of multi-sector partnerships. Additionally, Kevin has over 20 years of private sector experience serving in various leadership capacities as well as having gained experience in start-ups, and "turnarounds" of ongoing concerns. In addition to his public and private service he has enjoyed teaching college courses in business and has a Masters Degree in Business Administration from the University of Hartford.

Henry Scott joined Private Sector Exchange as the **Director of the Office of Private Sector Exchange Program Administration** in May of this year. Henry is a 15-year veteran of the Department, having previously worked in EUR's Office of Press and Public Diplomacy, ECA's Office of Global Education, and ECA's Office of Citizen Exchanges. Before joining the Department, Henry spent ten years managing USIA-sponsored educational exchange programs for citizens of Europe and Eurasia. For seven of those ten years, Henry was based in Moscow,

Russia, where he started up the American Councils for International Education and served as its director for two years.

Nicole Deaner serves as the **Managing Director in the Office of Private Sector Exchange**.

For over 20 years, Nicole has served as a foreign policy communications and strategic planning professional. Prior to joining Private Sector Exchange, she served as the Deputy Director and Director of Communications at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations in New York. She previously served as spokesperson for the Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, where she focused on Iraq/Afghanistan and military commissions. She also worked as head of communications for the Bureau of Educational Affairs, where she received a Superior Honor Award for highlighting international exchange programs in an unprecedented number of major national and international broadcast and print media. Nicole gained expertise in strategic planning and public outreach during the ten years she served as press officer in the Department of State's Bureau of Public Affairs.