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Restore International Education Funding to Align with U.S. Higher-Ed Goals

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The budget-deficit debacle distracted attention from many other budget decisions that affected higher education, including the fact that, in May, Congress substantially reduced grants for International Education and Foreign Language programs, referred to as the Department of Education's Title VI/Fulbright-Hays programs.



Until recently, few would have disputed whether or not global awareness programs were considered essential elements of quality higher education. A review of the [AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes](#) and recommended [High-Impact Educational Practices](#) supports the idea that any college or university degree that does not include a substantive global component shortchanges students in ways that run counter to our national aspirations for attainment of quality higher education.

Unfortunately, as a result of H.R. 1473 — the final spending agreement for FY 2011 — International Education and Foreign Language programs were cut by nearly \$50 million, an astounding 40 percent reduction. In turn, the Department of Education has cancelled the FY 2011 competition cycles for six essential international education granting programs.

Of course, reallocation of Federal funds is often prudent and sometimes necessary, particularly in times of economic hardship. Programs run their course, times and priorities change, and when resources are tight, we simply have to prioritize, even if that means we sacrifice some worthy programs in the process. I get that.

What I do not understand is how our Congressional leadership determined that these international education programs — which have been part of our national schema since 1958 and which may be more integral to our collective success now than ever before — are somehow no longer necessary or relevant.

Given that our national agenda for change includes making high-quality education accessible to a much larger percentage of the US population, and that we know global awareness is one of the key deliverables of a quality higher education, it is difficult to follow the rationale behind these cuts.

As Congress approaches another budgeting cycle, we must all support the call to restore Title VI funding for FY 2012.