Colombian University Wins “100,000 Strong in the Americas” Grant

On March 7, as part of President Obama’s 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative, the U.S. Department of State awarded Universidad EAFIT – a private Colombian university located in Medellín – a $25,000 capacity-building grant for its plan to increase student exchanges between the United States and Colombia.

This was the first round of the competitively-awarded grants aimed at providing funding to strengthen universities’ abilities to administer study abroad programs. The competition was eligible to higher education institutions in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama and Peru. Universidad EAFIT was one of 10 other Latin American universities to receive an award.

In partnership with Purdue University, EAFIT plans to increase the number of bilateral agreements with higher education institutions in the United States by 200 percent, having at least 10 to 20 students from the United States studying at EAFIT by 2015.

100,000 Strong in the Americas aims to increase international study in the Western Hemisphere – with the goal of increasing the number of U.S. students studying in Latin America to 100,000 and the number of Latin American students studying in the United States to 100,000 – by working with partners in the region.

Building on this initiative, during the fourth annual U.S.-Colombia High-Level Partnership Dialogue on February 28, the Embassy of the United States in Colombia, the Commission for Educational Exchange Between the United States and Colombia, the Colombian Ministry of Education and the Colombian Institute of Educational Credit and Technical Studies Abroad signed a joint statement regarding cooperation on academic mobility recognizing the importance of strengthening educational and cultural ties.
U.S. and Colombia Sign MOU to Develop a Solar Decathlon Competition in Cali

On Monday, March 10, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman, Colombian Minister of Energy and Mines Amylkar Acosta and Mayor of Santiago de Cali Rodrigo Guerrero signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to develop a Solar Decathlon Latin America and Caribbean competition to be held in Cali.

First launched in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Energy, the Solar Decathlon challenges university teams to design and build affordable, innovative and highly energy-efficient solar-powered homes. The last two editions of the competition have been held in Irvine, CA, and China.

On the signing of the MOU, Minister Acosta stated: “Although we have a clean energy matrix, mainly hydro, we are working towards diversifying it by incorporating more renewable sources. We consider the Solar Decathlon a unique opportunity to generate incentives among our Latin American and Caribbean students to use their innovative skills to design buildings that are energy efficient and self-sufficient, contributing to national and regional sustainable growth.”

Click here for more information.

Ambassador Villegas Highlights “The Pacific Pumas” Study

On Thursday, March 13, Ambassador of Colombia to the United States Luis Carlos Villegas participated in “The Pumas of the Pacific Alliance,” a panel discussion on the Pacific Alliance hosted by the Bertelsmann Foundation, in collaboration with the Council of Americas, launching the report “The Pacific Pumas.” The report highlights the advances, economic opportunities and strategic partnerships that these four countries offer the United States and Europe.

During the VIII Summit of the Pacific Alliance held in Cartagena, Colombia last month, the four leaders of the alliance signed an agreement to eliminate tariffs on 92 percent of goods and services, with the remaining 8 percent of tariffs to be removed over time.

In addition to Ambassador Villegas, the panel included: Harold W. Forsyth, Ambassador of Peru to the United States; Eduardo Medina Mora, Ambassador of Mexico to the United States; Mauricio Hurtado, Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of Chile to the United States; and Antoni Estevadeordal, Manager, Integration and Trade Sector, Inter-American Development Bank.

Click here for more information and to watch the discussion.
President Santos and Vice President Biden Discuss Expanding Economic and Energy Cooperation

On Tuesday, March 11, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos and U.S. Vice President Joe Biden met in Chile on the sidelines of the Presidential inauguration of Michelle Bachelet.

The two leaders discussed expanding economic and energy cooperation between the two countries, Colombia’s peace process and the continued fight against narcotraffickers, and the situation in Venezuela, among other topics.

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