

Joint U.S.-Mexico Statement on the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research: Connecting Tomorrow's Leaders Today

Office of the Spokesperson

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In May 2013, President Barack Obama and President Enrique Peña Nieto announced the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation and Research (herein referred to as FOBESII) to expand opportunities for educational exchanges, scientific research partnerships, and cross-border innovation. The goal was to help both countries develop a 21st century workforce for our mutual economic prosperity and sustainable social development. The official launching of FOBESII took place on May 21, 2014, during the visit of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to Mexico City.

FOBESII builds on longstanding cooperation among our governments, the private sector and academic institutions, including in such areas as the Fulbright-Garcia Robles program, EducationUSA educational advising services and language instruction. It complements President Obama's 100,000 Strong in the Americas initiative, which seeks to increase student mobility between the United States and the countries of the Western Hemisphere, including Mexico. It is also consistent with Mexico's *Proyecto 100,000* program that aims to send 100,000 Mexican students to the United States and to receive 50,000 US students in Mexico by 2018.

Through FOBESII, the U.S. and Mexico bring together government, the higher education community, the private sector, and civil society to promote workforce development, educational and research cooperation and encourage broader access to quality post-secondary education especially for traditionally underserved demographic groups, including women, and in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. They also aim to expand student, scholar, and teacher exchanges, promote language acquisition, increase joint research, promote workforce development and share best practices between the two countries.

2014 FOBESII Achievements

Twenty months after announcing the Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation and Research (FOBESII) and eight months after its official launching and the creation of *Proyecto 100,000*, academic and scientific cooperation between Mexico and the United States is rapidly expanding as existing partnerships are reinforced and new collaborations are created.

From January to June 2014, the governments of Mexico and the United States held a series of six workshops, designed to solicit the input, recommendations and commitment of key stakeholders on issues critical to the accomplishment of the Forum's goals. These six sessions, which included over 450 U.S. and Mexican partners from government, academia, civil society and the private sector, enabled us to review existing best practices in academic exchange and joint research and innovation, and to create a roadmap for where we hope to go in 2015. This Action Plan is divided into four main pillars: Academic Mobility, Language Acquisition, Workforce Development, and Joint Research and Innovation. Four standing working groups will help ensure forward movement in these pillars in 2015.

Working together, the U.S. and Mexican governments, with enormous support from academia and the private sector, have helped facilitate the travel of almost 27,000 Mexican students and teachers to the United States in 2014, doubling recent numbers of Mexicans studying in the United States. We also built new partnerships and strengthened relationships between U.S. and Mexican stakeholders.

A number of U.S. university presidents visited Mexico in 2014, including from the Universities of California, Harvard, Rice, MIT, New Mexico, and Arizona State. Their visits, and those of the Governors of California and New Jersey as well as the Mayors of Los Angeles and Albuquerque, have resulted in more than 23 new educational agreements between our countries. In 2014, Arkansas State University broke ground in Queretaro on the first public U.S. university campus in Mexico. Colorado State University also broke ground on a new Research Center in Baja California Sur that will be home to an Agricultural and Water Research Center, as well as provide lodging for students and faculty for short-term programs. Education delegations from Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nevada, Texas, Utah and West Virginia also visited Mexico in 2014 to examine ways to increase student exchange between their states and Mexico.

With both governments' leadership, in October 2014, we launched the binational webpage *Mobilitas* to promote academic opportunities in both countries. In the fall of that same year, Mexico and the United States organized eight educational fairs in Mexico, including one at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Additionally, 50 presidents and administrators of Mexican universities participated in the 2014 annual meeting of the American Council on Education. Representatives from the Mexican government and higher education institutions also attended the 2014 editions of NAFSA, APLU, CONAHEC and AIEA annual meetings. In addition, five Mexican universities joined the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) as full members.

In an unprecedented effort, the government of Mexico awarded 7,500 *SEP-SRE Proyecta 100,000* scholarships for short term intensive English language courses for underserved students and teachers (59% women). Additionally, working with the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, the *SEP-Bécalos-Santander Universidades* Program provided need-and-merit based scholarships to close to 300 Mexican Students from *Universidades Tecnológicas Bilingües* (Bilingual technological Universities) providing them the opportunity to study in six U.S. Community Colleges, improving their English skills in core fields of study and enhancing their intercultural awareness. The Engineering and Intensive English Internship Program of the Mexican Chamber of Electronics, Telecommunications and Information Technologies (*CANIETI*) awarded grants to 50 Mexican students to study Engineering, English and GRE preparation studies as a first step to do postgraduate studies in the U.S. in a near future. *CONACYT* launched a short research program for Mexican students in strategic areas, with special emphasis in Energy and Telecommunications.

In the framework of FOBESII, Mexico's National Association of Universities and Higher Education Institutions (ANUIES) initiated collaborative arrangements with universities and research centers in California, Massachusetts, and Texas, and launched a co-development and commercialization collaboration with the NASA Johnson Space Center as well as one on cyber infrastructure with the University of Texas in El Paso (UTEP). It is also developing entrepreneurship, innovation and internship programs with the American Chamber of Commerce of Mexico and the California Chamber of Commerce and has initiated discussions with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) about ways in which Mexican and U.S. quality assurance and accrediting organizations might work together.

The United States and Mexico are currently working on the development of binational research and innovation centers, such as the recently launched Logistic and Distribution, the Intelligent Maintenance and Advanced Nonferrous Alloys and Materials consortia. This is in addition to the cooperation agreements between the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Marine Research Institutions Consortium (CIIMAR-GOMC) and three U.S. organizations (U.S. Gulf of Mexico University Research Collaborative, the Harte Research Institute and the Northern Gulf Institute) as well as a binational virtual center on Advanced Manufacturing between CONACYT's Center of Advanced Technology (CIATEQ) and the University of Texas (PanAM and Austin).

In scientific research partnerships, the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Science and Technology Council of Mexico (CONACYT) have strengthened their bilateral partnerships through FOBESII. CONACYT became an official partner in NSF's Partnership for International Research and Education program (PIRE). As a result, binational research projects on science and technology will be funded by the two agencies. With the U.S.-Mexico Foundation for Science (FUMEC), the two agencies also expanded joint work with NSF's Innovation Corps (I-Corps) and Industry/University Cooperative Research Centers (I/UCRC) programs. Two workshops and one symposium, which brought together over 240 U.S. and Mexican participants from government, academia, and the private sector, provided forums to adapt the I-Corps model to Mexico (workshops) and to launch the Intelligent Manufacturing Initiative (symposium). A seven-week I-Corps training program is planned for 2015. Four NSF I/UCRCs partner with Mexican institutions in the sectors of advanced nonferrous alloys, intelligent manufacturing, logistics/distribution and petroleum.

In collaboration with the Department of Energy (DOE), the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and the National Institute of Astrophysics, Optics and Electronics of Mexico (INAOE), NSF and CONACYT have also funded the construction of the 14 million dollar High Altitude Cherenkov Observatory (HAWC) on the flanks of the Sierra Negra volcano near Puebla, Mexico. HAWC is a wide field of view, continuously operating, TeV gamma-ray experiment, which will be used to study the most extreme environments in the known universe: supernova explosions, active galactic nuclei, and gamma-ray bursts. HAWC will be inaugurated in March 2015.

In 2015, NSF and CONACYT will focus on exploring opportunities to: expand the I-Corps model and the I/UCRC program in Mexico; coordinate research programs related to energy, water, and hazards; collaborate trilaterally between U.S., Mexico and Canada; and promote a multinational collaboration for addressing gender issues in research and innovation.

Delivering on our agenda

As noted during the 2014 North American Leaders' Summit, "the future success and competitiveness of our region depends on our ability to foster innovation, provide our citizens access to high quality educational opportunities and to technology, and promote a workforce with the skills necessary for success in the 21st century global economy." FOBESII is an integral component of our broader High Level Economic Dialogue goal of creating the most competitive and dynamic region in the world.

Our focus in 2015 will be on achieving the strategic objectives identified in FOBESII's 2014 action plan. Special attention will be paid to our broader workforce development goals, including specific efforts in key sectors such as energy, technology, and advanced manufacturing. We will work together in strategic issues through the Academies of

Engineering and Science of both countries. Our governments look forward to increased private sector cooperation on both sides of the border on internships and collaboration among universities to ensure appropriate training and education to meet the workforce needs of the future. *CONACYT* will continue its efforts to sign agreements with U.S. universities, particularly with state university systems, such as the University of California, the University of Texas and the University of Arizona. This will lead to more Mexican students pursuing graduate education and postdoctoral studies in the United States. *CONACYT* will also develop mobility programs involving American firms, so that Mexican students can participate in internships at American corporations as part of their academic programs.

The success of this vision will hinge on its follow up. The FOBESII working groups will play a key role in this regard, as will state and federal government agencies, private sector organizations and universities on both sides of the border. Working together, we can ensure that the U.S.-Mexico academic partnership and joint innovation and research create a lasting strong foundation for a region of economic, social, and political prosperity in the future.