

American Councils for International Education

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About American Councils

The world's most successful institutions and determined nations work with American Councils for International Education through cultural exchange, language training, and professional development.

Since 1974, our educational portfolio has grown to include 90 countries important to national security, prosperity, and peace. Our programs are backed by thorough research to ensure their quality and integrity. Our participants represent a spectrum of learners, from high school through the postdoctoral and professional level.

To date, we have built a community of more than 94,000 alumni, including national leaders, ministers, members of parliament, ambassadors, and CEOs.

Mission

American Councils strengthens international ties and mutual understanding through excellence in academic, professional and cultural exchange, language acquisition, educational development, and research.

Vision

Empower individuals and institutions to address challenges in a diverse and interconnected world.



Our Philosophy

We believe that international education should be accessible for all. That is why our focus is to advance scholarly research and cross-border learning through the design and implementation of educational programs grounded in key world languages, cultures, and regions.

Through international training, cultural exchange, immersion learning, and public diplomacy, we broaden individual perspectives and foster personal and intellectual growth. On a grand scale, these efforts strengthen international and national security, build prosperity, and promote peace.

Learn More

To learn more about how we can work together,

We Support SDGs

American Councils for International Education supports Sustainable Development Goals.



American Councils for International Education is a DC-based nonprofit with nearly 500 amazing staff located around the world. A trusted partner to governments and institutions alike, our multilateral initiatives enable citizens to advance personally and professionally through cultural exchange, language training, and professional development. Please contact us to learn more.

Our Leadership

The mission and vision of American Councils are achieved through the guidance, input, and expertise of the organization's executive management and Board of Trustees. All parties bring a wealth of global experience, knowledge, and an unwavering commitment to our shared success.



Dr. David P. Patton, President and CEO

David P. Patton, PhD, became President and CEO of American Councils in August 2019, following his tenure as acting president since March 2019.

Previously, Dr. Patton served as an executive vice president, with primary responsibility for the oversight of American Councils' regional offices, higher education portfolio, and development efforts.

In 1993, Dr. Patton joined American Councils to serve as the New Independent States (NIS) regional director in Moscow. He was named the vice president for field operations in 2002, overseeing more than 50 field offices in 15 countries in Europe and Eurasia.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Patton served as deputy director of the NIS Exchanges and Training Project, a major USAID-funded program for short-term professional development for NIS citizens. He also worked as the assistant director of The Ohio State University Center for Slavic

and East European Studies. Dr. Patton also serves as the president of the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research.

He has studied and worked in the NIS region and Central Europe since 1983. He completed his PhD in Slavic linguistics at The Ohio State University. His dissertation is on analytic development in the modern Russian language. He completed his bachelor's degree in Russian studies at the University of Oregon.



Lisa Choate, Executive Vice President

Lisa Choate has primary responsibility for the oversight of American Councils' portfolio of secondary school programs, teacher programs, and professional programs, including Open World, the largest annual citizen exchange initiative in the history of US-Russia relations. She has been an executive vice president since 2012.

Ms. Choate joined American Councils in 1987, serving as vice president of what was then known as the American Council of Teachers of Russian. Her work has included executive management, with an emphasis on new program design and alumni programming.

Ms. Choate has studied at length and traveled frequently in Russia and Eurasia since 1982. She completed her master's degree in education and second language acquisition at Boston University and her bachelor's degree in Russian language and literature at Bryn Mawr College.



Michael Curtis, Senior Vice President, Strategic Development

Michael Curtis is entrusted with creating measurable and lasting impact to American Councils' participants and stakeholders worldwide. As senior vice president of strategic development, Mr. Curtis pursues and secures new opportunities, promotes the organization's achievements, and strengthens outreach to current and future strategic partners.

In the early 1990s, Mr. Curtis worked at one of the first western investment and consulting firms in St. Petersburg, Russia, where he advised US corporate clients and supported US exports to the Russian aviation industry. In 1999, Mr. Curtis joined American Councils to oversee its Uzbekistan office; soon after, his portfolio expanded to regional operations throughout Central Asia and Afghanistan.

In 2006, Mr. Curtis transitioned to American Councils' headquarters in Washington, DC to lead its business development efforts and in 2015, he was named vice president of program and business development. As vice president, Mr. Curtis oversaw federal and non-federal development efforts and new market expansion in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. More recently, Mr. Curtis was the chief of international business development at the University of Southern California's top-ranked school of pharmacy, where he was responsible for strategic growth internationally.

Mr. Curtis is a fluent speaker of Russian, lived overseas in Russia and Central Asia for more than 10 years, and maintains close ties to numerous overseas universities and ministries of education. He holds an MBA and master of international business from the Katz Graduate School of Business at the University of Pittsburgh, and graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz with a BA in European history.



John Henderson, Chief Financial Officer

John Henderson has worked in both public and private accounting for more than 25 years. Mr. Henderson oversees and directs all the financial and accounting activities at American Councils. He joined the organization in 2001.

Mr. Henderson has a strong background in taxation, budgets, financial controls, cash management, federal grants, purchasing, reporting, and administration. Earlier in his career, Mr. Henderson served as the director of finance at the American Society of Clinical Oncology, a \$30M association in Alexandria, Virginia. He also held the post of controller and then vice president of finance and administration for the American Rehabilitation Association in Reston, Virginia.

Mr. Henderson holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and business from George Mason University and is a certified public accountant (CPA). He is also a member of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.



Kasia Hutoron, GPHR, PHR, Senior Human Resources Director

Kasia Hutoron has worked in human relations for more than 20 years. She joined American Councils in 2019.

Previously, Ms. Hutoron worked as the human resources director for Population Reference Bureau, a nonprofit which specializes in global health and demography research. She has also held various senior human resource positions with PricewaterhouseCoopers in Warsaw, Prague, and McLean, VA and FINCA International in Washington, DC.

She holds a certificate in global professional in human resources and in professional human resources, as well as a law degree from the University of Warsaw. Ms. Hutoron also has a certificate in American law studies from the University of Florida, and certificates in English law and the law of the European Union.



Dr. Dan E. Davidson, Director of American Councils Research Center (ARC) and Senior Academic Advisor

Dan E. Davidson, PhD, is the co-founder and president emeritus of American Councils for International Education and emeritus professor of Russian and second language acquisition,

Myra T. Cooley Lectureship, at Bryn Mawr College. He has been the director of American Councils Research Center (ARC) since 2017.

He is the author/editor of 24 books and 65 scholarly articles in the fields of language, culture, and educational development, including a major 20-year longitudinal analysis of adult second language acquisition during study abroad.

Dr. Davidson was named in 2015 to the Commission on Languages, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and is an elected foreign member of the Russian Academy of Education, the Ukrainian Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, vice president of the International Association of Teachers of Russian (MAPRIAL), and past chair of the College Board World Languages Advisory Committee, the Joint National Committee for Languages, and the Alliance for International Education Exchange.

His most recent study, *Assessing Language Proficiency and Intercultural Development in the Overseas Immersion Context*, appeared in “Exploring the US Language Flagship Program. Professional Competence in a Second Language by Graduation (Multilingual Matters)” in 2016.

Dr. Davidson completed his PhD in Slavic languages at Harvard University.



Ann Domorad, Senior Managing Director of Field Operations and Programs

Ann Domorad oversees education services, development, public diplomacy and community resource programs at American Councils. She supports the operational capacity of staff and programs across Southeast Europe, Eurasia, and Central Asia, as well as expanding infrastructure and partnerships in new geographies.

Ms. Domorad officially joined American Councils in 1993 as part of the first team to work on the Future Leaders Exchange program. In 1999, she was named the first program manager of what is now the Open World Program.

In addition to her work with exchange programs, Ms. Domorad has worked on regional projects to develop capacity in education administration, reduce corruption in education, and increase academic integrity in higher and secondary education. She has helped US and Eurasian institutions of higher education to establish long-term, mutually satisfying partnerships, many related to innovation, entrepreneurship, and research commercialization.

She holds a bachelor's degree in Russian language and literature from Swarthmore College and graduate degrees from the University of Washington's Evans School of Public Affairs (MPA) and Jackson School of International Studies (MAIS). She lived and worked in Russia from 1992 to 2006 and is a fluent speaker of Russian.



Benjamin Gaylord, Director

Benjamin Gaylord leads a range of programs for international young professionals and secondary school students from dozens of countries, focusing on program design and management, as well as participant support. Since 2013, he has supported American Councils' strategic planning process and organizational development.

Mr. Gaylord joined American Councils in 1995, serving in both the overseas field offices as well as the headquarters office in Washington, DC. He has worked on program design, participant support, recruitment, event planning, and training. Since 2004, he has led the inbound secondary school and professional programs departments, overseeing significant growth and new partnerships for these programs. He also served as American Councils ombudsman from 2008-19.

Mr. Gaylord has a bachelor's degree in Russian language and literature from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and a master's degree in conflict analysis and resolution from George

Mason University. He has significant experience living and traveling extensively in Eurasia, Europe, and Latin America and is fluent in Russian, Spanish, and Dutch.

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Diversity and Inclusion

Who We Are

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core to the mission and vision of American Councils as an international organization working to empower individuals and institutions to address challenges in a diverse and interconnected world.

Our programs work to build mutual understanding through cross-cultural learning and communication that values cultural diversity and reflection. Through these processes, our participants grow, and their understanding of the world deepens. The nature of our work uniquely provides us opportunities to grow as an organization, as we seek to understand and expand the diversity of perspectives, opinions, and backgrounds among program participants and staff members.

What We Believe

We believe diversity – including but not limited to differences of race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, religion, age, disability, geographic location, and socio-economic status – makes our programs and our workforce stronger.

We believe that international education should be accessible for all. We believe that cultural and demographic diversity enriches and strengthens our world and serves to cultivate respect for the communities with which we work. We promote diversity, equal opportunity, and inclusion, embracing individual and social differences both within our own ranks and among those we serve. We support a diversity of perspectives and opinions, which build a strong

foundation for an effective, growing, and multifaceted organization.

What We Are Doing

We believe that diversity and inclusion should be embedded throughout all aspects of our work, and that change requires sustained and intentional effort at all levels of our organization. Below are some of American Councils ongoing activities focused on fostering inclusion among our participants and our colleagues.

The Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (CoDEI), formed in 2017, is a staff-led initiative that strives to foster interdepartmental collaboration across American Councils outbound programs to support equity, inclusion, and access to study abroad and cross-cultural educational opportunities for a diverse U.S. student population. CoDEI regularly hosts brownbag learning sessions focused on participant support, contributes to participant recruitment efforts, and shares diversity and inclusion resources across the organization. Among its activities, CoDEI supports the following scholarship opportunities for American Councils participants:

- [American Councils Assistance Fund](#)
- [American Councils Diversity and Inclusion Scholarship](#)

The Staff Committee on Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (SCIDE) focuses on leading discussions and proposing actions that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within American Councils. Specifically, SCIDE concentrates on internal policies, procedures, and recruitment practices, including hiring, promotion, and development of American Councils staff. The committee includes staff from overseas field offices and Washington, DC, representing various departments, levels of tenure, and backgrounds.

The Task Force on Diversity and Inclusivity has been established by the Board of Directors. Suggestions and recommendations of the Task Force will be presented to the Board of Trustees for discussion and subsequent action. The task force comprises of 3-4 members of the Board of Trustees and 3-4 AC staff members.

American Councils staff may join a number of **Affinity Spaces** designed for employees representing underrepresented groups, including but not limited to spaces for staff who identify as part of Asian, Black, or LGBTQ+ communities.

All American Councils staff and participants have access to **Ethics Gateway**, where they may confidentially report any concerns or incidents including but not limited to biases, discrimination or harassment, or misconduct.

We are also proud of our **partnerships with leading organizations** in the field of education abroad that promote diversity and inclusion, including the following:

- Diversity Abroad
- The Forum on Education Abroad
- NAFSA
- Generation Study Abroad
- Mobility International USA

Where We Are Going

We strive to cultivate an inclusive work environment where all employees are engaged and have the opportunity to develop and succeed.

American Councils recognizes that diversity, equity, and inclusion should be woven through all that we do as an organization, with an emphasis on action, and that this work is ongoing, with no defined endpoint.

Through ongoing engagement with and commitment to this work, we will strengthen our capacity to engage in our mission as an organization. In addition to advancing our knowledge and representation of diversity, equity, and inclusion internally as an organization, we will continue to strengthen our work to recruit and provide inclusive support for diverse staff and participants on American Councils programs.

Financials

American Councils for International Education is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization. View more at Guidestar.org.



Documents

[2016-17 American Councils 990 Public Disclosure](#)

[2015-16 American Councils 990 Public Disclosure](#)

[2014-15 American Councils 990 Public Disclosure](#)

Partnerships

Our success is not possible without supporters and partnerships.

Partner with American Councils

We count every exchange student, fellow, host parent, donor, and visiting teacher among our valued partners. We are also thankful for the institutions, ministries, embassies and many U.S. high schools, colleges, and universities that make our work in international education possible.

Our partnerships empower cultural and educational advancements, language acquisition, foster dialogue, and promote peace in countries vital to our national security and economy.

Learn more about our [philanthropic initiatives and scholarships](#), or [how you can volunteer](#) or provide in-kind donations or services to support students, emerging leaders, and public servants from 80 countries.

Our Partners

We are a trusted recipient of funding from sources including the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Education, the Library of Congress, National Endowment for the Humanities, Carnegie Corporation of New York, USAID, The Defense Language and National Security Education Office, and many foreign governments and their ministries of education.







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In the Media

Our participants and alumni have inspired countless articles, op-eds, and blogs in local, national, and international outlets, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, BuzzFeed, Fortune, and Teen Vogue.

Our executive team lends expertise on topics covering cultural exchange, citizen diplomacy, and research in critical and less commonly taught languages.

For inquiries, contact [Michael Curtis](#).

Selected Coverage

[Pew Research Center](#): "Most European students learn English in school." Kat Devlin. April 9, 2020.

[The New York Times](#): "Louisiana Says 'Oui' to French, Amid Explosion in Dual-Language Schools." Richard Fausset. August 21, 2019.

[The Colorado Springs Gazette](#): "Challenger Learning Center's STEM campers work on mission to Mars, robots." Heila Rogers. August 7, 2019.

[The Economist](#): "Ordinary Americans and Chinese Seem to Be Drifting Apart." Print edition, special report. May 16, 2019.

[The Washington Post](#): Letter to the Editor, "Lugar's Legacy." Megan Lysaght. May 10, 2019.

[Quartz](#): "Only 20% of US kids study a language in school—compared to 92% in Europe." Ephrat Livni. August 7, 2018.

[Pew Research Center](#): "Most European students are learning a foreign language in school while Americans lag." Kat Devlin. August 6, 2018.

[The Biberaj Foundation](#): "The Biberaj Foundation announces co-sponsoring \$2.5 million in the Albanian-American Development Foundation's Master's Degree Fellowship to support Albanian professionals." July 14, 2018.

[West Orange Schools](#). "West Orange student earns scholarship to study Arabic in Jordan." Cynthia Cumming. July 16, 2018.

[Armenia News](#): "US students carry out internships in Armenia." July 8, 2018.

[Baylor University](#): "International studies / Russian major awarded Boren scholarship." Lori Fogleman. June 6, 2018.

[The White House](#): "The United States and Uzbekistan: Launching a new era of strategic partnership." White House Press Release. May 16, 2018.

[Des Moines Register](#): "New high school honor: Iowa approves 'Seal of Biliteracy' for speaking two languages." Mackenzie Ryan. April 18, 2018.

[Borgen Magazine](#): "What is the FLEX program?" Nicholas DeMarco. March 17, 2018.

[Education Week](#): "I work in a globally-minded school. Here's why students are better for it." Jack Davern. January 31, 2018.

[Quartz](#): "Language classes in the US are finally useful." Nikhil Sonnad and Dan Kopf. January 8, 2018.

Contact Us

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