

BY WILLIAM L. GERTZ

All signs point to a marked increase in student educational exchange opportunities between the United States and the countries of Latin America. This increase will be fueled by economic development and social change throughout Latin America, as well as rapid demographic change in the United States.

First and foremost is the improving economic situation. According to the International Monetary Fund, Latin America's economy will grow 3.7 percent in 2012 and 4.1 percent in 2013. A growing middle class means that more Latin American students have the resources to attend U.S. colleges and universities. According to *Open Doors*, Mexico, Brazil, Columbia, and Venezuela rank within the top 25 places of origin for international students attending U.S. universities, with a combined total of 35,498 in the 2011/12 academic year.

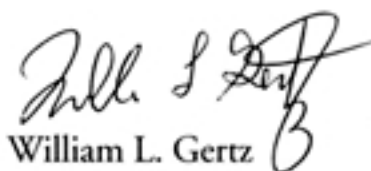
We also see this impact at the secondary level, where participation has increased and demand is unprecedented. The American Institute For Foreign Study (AIFS) and our Foundation have experienced significant increases among Latin American students for our J-1 visa programs. More than 1,000 students from Latin America participate in our Au Pair in America and Academic Year in America cultural exchange programs, with the highest representation being from Brazil, Columbia, and Mexico.

More Latin American students are also participating in AIFS summer opportunities at the primary and middle school levels, and we expect this growth to continue. Students from Mexico, Honduras, Argentina, Costa Rica, and Venezuela attend our Summer Institute for the Gifted academic camp programs.

Latin America's economic development has helped to stabilize the region politically and socially, which has helped to increase its popularity as a study abroad destination. Additionally, the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the United States is contributing to greater study-abroad participation in Latin America. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, there are now more than 52 million Americans of Hispanic descent, and Spanish is now spoken by over 12 percent of the population. Spanish language proficiency is becoming a necessity in the United States, and cultural and language immersion are the most effective means to achieve this end.

AIFS has seen significant growth among U.S. students studying on our programs in Chile, Peru, Costa Rica, and Brazil. We are expanding our Latin American opportunities and have just inaugurated a program in Buenos Aires. As we expand our institutional relationships throughout Latin America, AIFS will continue to develop international educational programs focused on language, history, culture, business, and ecology.

We are pleased to once again partner with the Institute of International Education on our continuing Global Education Research Reports.



William L. Gertz

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