

LEVERAGING PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND HIGHER EDUCATION COLLABORATION AND ACADEMIC EXCHANGE IN THE AMERICAS

An Impact Study of the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund

Anna Herrero Tejada and Sarah Stanton

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An Impact Study of the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Fund

EDUCATION PROGRAM REPORT JUNE 2021

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Executive Summary.....	iv
I. INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITY OF 100K STRONG IN THE AMERICAS.....	1
The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Model.....	1
Study Objectives	3
Analytical Approach	5
Methodological Note	6
Expanding Access and Inclusion	9
II. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS	9
Skills Development and Future Trajectories for LAC Students	14
Skills Development and Future Trajectories for U.S. Students	17
A Comparative Experience	20
III. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH.....	22
Criteria for Participation and Implementation Challenges.....	22
Internal and Institutional Development.....	26
External Partnerships.....	29
A Comparative Experience	32
IV. DONOR-PARTNER ENGAGEMENT AND PERCEIVED IMPACT.....	34
Criteria for Contributing.....	35
Strategic Benefits	38
Perceived Impact on Grantees	40
V. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	42
Recommendations to Maximize the Impact of 100K Programs and Grants.....	42
Recommendations to Expand the 100K Fund and Further Leverage Current Partnerships.....	46
VI. CONCLUSION	48
References	49
Endnotes.....	50

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Over 100 higher education institutions responded to a survey, 15 students and 15 program directors participated in our focus groups and eight donor-partners were interviewed—all of whom made this study possible. The authors are grateful for everyone who took the time to respond to our questions.

Executive Summary

Educational exchange initiatives have long been used as a tool to both foster international cooperation and promote the development of the technical and linguistic skills needed to operate in an increasingly globalized world. In spite of the potential benefits, opportunities for educational exchange within the Americas are not always universally accessible or particularly robust when compared with other regions of the world. Limited financing schemes and the weakness of intra-regional academic networks have hindered internationalization efforts and privileged other host regions, certain institution types and student populations.

To address these limitations, the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) at the U.S. Department of State (DOS), under cooperative agreements and in collaboration with Partners of the Americas (POA), has developed and managed the hemisphere-wide 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund (the 100K Fund). The 100K Fund is a large public-private partnership that has leveraged over \$22M in contributions in the last seven years. Since 2013, the overarching goals of the 100K Fund have been to (a) build partnerships between higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States and the rest of the Western Hemisphere, (b) increase opportunities for students to participate in new models of academic exchange and training programs at their home and host institutions, and (c) increase the number and diversity of students in the Americas who have access to innovative academic training opportunities to work in teams, gain technical, linguistic and inter-cultural skills, and ultimately prepare for the workforce.

Building on findings from previous studies, this report evaluates the fund's success in achieving its goals by focusing on three areas where a multi-dimensional, comparative examination sheds light on formerly unexplored issues of the 100K Fund: **student development and access; HEI development and growth; donor-partner motivations and perceived impact.** This study offers new perspectives by amplifying the voice of Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) grantees (students and HEIs) alongside U.S. grantees, and drawing a comparative analysis of their experiences with the 100K Fund. The data to inform this evaluation was collected over a period of five months through qualitative and quantitative methods, including (a) two sets of surveys completed by 116 winning HEIs as well as 12 out of 28 donors from public and private sectors in the U.S. and LAC; (b) four sets of focus groups with HEI

representatives and students in the U.S. and LAC; and (c) eight one-hour interviews with eight 100K Fund donor-partners.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS

Despite their short-term nature, **100K-funded programs in the last seven years have undoubtedly had a lasting, catalytic impact on the academic and professional development, as well as the future trajectories, of participating students.**

Short-term impact. Students participating in 100K-funded programs were able to hone their subject-specific skills, as well as their inter-cultural communication and linguistic skills, through exposure to new contexts, work modalities, academic discourses and technological innovation. U.S. students' experience was largely focused on gaining practical training in a different context and learning about the region while practicing Spanish. Latin American students were primarily focused on absorbing academic innovation from U.S. institutions, creating connections they could leverage for further study or professional development and improving their English language skills.

Long-term impact. **The 100K Fund has enabled students in the U.S. and LAC to advance, launch, or transform their academic and professional trajectories, while planting a seed for lasting, collaborative networks across the hemisphere.** Receiving 100K funds was a catalyst for LAC students to search for other opportunities to study abroad and expand their academic and professional horizons. 100K-funded programs shaped the course of U.S. students' academic and professional trajectories by turning their focus to LAC issues and instilling in them a more inclusive and regional and global perspective. Students highlighted the lasting connections with their 100K-host university staff and fellow students as one of the most valuable benefits of their participation in 100K-funded programs.

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) and access. **100K student cohorts are consistently more diverse than the overall student population in their institutions and other U.S.-based academic exchange programs.** Institutions identified several barriers that hindered their ability to effectively implement DEI strategies in the recruitment and selection of underrepresented students—namely students' language abilities, interest in the region, competing student responsibilities, associated costs and visa or

travel restrictions. High levels of student interest at Latin American and Caribbean institutions led to competitive selection processes and demanding English language requirements which sometimes hindered their DEI efforts. Insufficient interest among students in U.S. institutions led to creative recruitment solutions.

Ultimately, the impact of students' **participation in 100K-funded program has been catalytic in stimulating mobility across the hemisphere** by actively involving other students in 100K-funded programs and causing a ripple effect in 100K alumni's communities.

HEI DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

100K grants have served as a platform to increase collaboration within higher education institutions; set a successful precedent for expanding international and regional education initiatives; and, fuel conversations about the importance of intra-regional cooperation between higher education institutions.

Internal growth. 100K grants had a significant, positive impact on institutions' internal development, regardless of country or size. For larger institutions with a dedicated international partnerships office, the 100K grant allowed them to scale-up internal funding and support for additional intra-regional mobility programs beyond 100K. The grant was especially transformational for smaller institutions without an established study abroad operation, by enabling them to build valuable technical knowledge and experience, gain leadership support and, ultimately, develop pathways towards establishing a dedicated international education office. **100K grants had a very positive impact on internal collaboration and inter-departmental cooperation.**

External partnership development. Compared to student-level scholarship models of a similar magnitude, **100K's focus on partnership development has led to more sustainable academic collaborations.** Most 100K-grant winning institutions have successfully implemented MOUs as a result of their participation in 100K funded-programs, including creating and maintaining faculty connections and research collaborations. Ultimately, the collaborative nature of the grant-writing process for 100K awards has led to reliable, committed partnerships, and strengthened regional education cooperation. Nonetheless, beyond the initial 100K-grant cycle, program sustainability remains an issue for many HEIs. LAC HEIs and smaller U.S. HEIs seem to face additional barriers to partnership sustainability

that are not addressed by a single cycle of 100K funding. However, even in institutions where partnerships did not outlast the grant, **100K's model for exchange has served as a template for both U.S. and LAC HEIs to pursue similar partnerships in the future.**

DONOR ENGAGEMENT AND PERCEIVED IMPACT

Donors interviewed and surveyed for this study expressed interest in continuing to support the 100K Fund, including possibly increasing their investment along with their level of involvement to fulfill the potential of the 100K model and support the hemisphere-wide goals of increasing exchanges and workforce development opportunities.

Motivations for contributing. Donors chose to partner with the 100K Fund mainly because of its thematic alignment with their corporate social responsibility (CSR) goals or mission, industry or DEI focus. Regional governmental partners saw additional benefits in externalizing the management of their public sector funds to a third, trusted party and engaging with an exchange program branded by the U.S. government. For larger donors, their contribution to the 100K Fund was often just one component of a robust philanthropic strategy, while smaller donors saw the fund as a chance to leverage their resources to reach students across the hemisphere, create training programs, and form regional public-private sector partnerships.

Strategic benefits and impact. Donors value the impact of the 100K Fund on their grantees more so than the impact their partnerships could have on their own strategic, institutional objectives. However, **private and public sector donors report the 100K Fund has had a valuable impact on their relationships with academic and government sector in the U.S. and the LAC region.** Private sector donors interviewed, particularly transnational companies, agree that the 100K Fund's positive impact on public policy discourse around hemispheric relations favored their current and future operations. For regional government partners, forming lasting relationships with U.S. government institutions, including U.S. embassies, has helped ensure the continuity of their programs through changes in administrations in their countries.

Perceived impact on grantees. **Government partners of the 100K Fund agree that 100K grants had a transformative impact on students' professional trajectories,** while sustainably strengthening HEIs capacity for inter-regional collaborations and successfully

advancing their DEI goals, both at the student and institutional level. Private sector donors generally agreed that the 100K Fund has the potential to scale up their current operations and further stimulate student mobility and workforce development in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 100K Fund is an impactful initiative that effectively catalyzes student development and mobility across the Americas, builds internal capacity in HEIs, expands regional public-private partnerships and creates the conditions for enduring connections between governments, the private sector, foundations and academic networks.

Higher education institutions, students and donor-partners that participated in this study firmly believe in the 100K Fund's transformational potential and identify several opportunities to maximize 100K's impact:

1. Strengthen and monitor inclusion-focused student recruitment and selection strategies by offering technical support to HEIs.
2. Continue to connect 100K Strong in the Americas to other DOS programs or departments to further strengthen DOS' capacity to address systematic barriers to student participation in academic exchange programs, including 100K, such as lack of language abilities or low interest in or knowledge of LAC countries.
3. Curate a more active alumni network, for both HEIs and students, to sustain the catalytic effect of the grant beyond initial participation.
4. Consider extending some 100K grants to cover two to three-year funding cycles for institutions without established international education operations.
5. Build more systematic relationships between private sector donors and grantees in order to expand skills development opportunities.
6. Further utilize some 100K Fund donor-partners' operational capacity and expertise in higher education and international education programming.
7. Promote the contributions of new donors-partners and create an Innovation Fund Donor Network to exchange best practices and foster higher donor engagement.
8. Explore the possibility of adding mentorship or internship components to complement the 100K-funded exchange and training program by taking advantage of existing skills development pipelines in private sector foundations or donor corporations.

I. INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITY OF 100K STRONG IN THE AMERICAS

Educational exchange initiatives have long been used as a tool to both foster international cooperation and promote the development of the technical and linguistic skills needed to operate in an increasingly globalized world. Given the economic and political interdependence of the countries in the Western Hemisphere, increasing student mobility presents a set of opportunities for numerous stakeholders, including governments, corporations, and higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as the students they serve. Increased mobility can help governments advance strategic interests and build relations across the region, while allowing transnational corporations to strengthen local capacity in critical industries and sectors. Ultimately, intra-regional mobility can enhance HEIs' efforts to align students' practical skills to the shifting demands of the labor market.

Despite the potential benefits, opportunities for educational exchange within the Americas are not universally accessible or particularly robust when compared with other world regions. Limited financing schemes and the weakness of intra-regional academic networks have hindered internationalization efforts and privileged other host regions, certain institution types and student populations. In the U.S., participation in study abroad programs remains a privilege available only to the few. In the 2018-19 academic year, only 1.8% of all students enrolled in U.S. HEIs studied abroad for any duration of time.¹ This small segment is not representative of the U.S. student population, or the kinds of higher education institutions they attend. In the 2018-19 academic year, almost 68.7% of all U.S. students who studied abroad were white, even though white students only make up 55.2% of postsecondary enrollment. Asian students were also overrepresented, while only 6.4% of students studying abroad identified as black and 10.9% identified as Latino despite representing almost a combined third of the total enrollment (see Table 1)².

Student mobility rates in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) have grown significantly in the last decade but remain relatively low when compared to those of other regions. From 2012 to 2017, the number of students from LAC who studied abroad increased by 16%–6 percentage points more than the global mobility growth average.³ North America and Europe are generally the regions of choice for students in LAC, accounting for 54% of the total mobility, followed by countries within Latin America, which receive 38% of traveling students. Europe has remained the host region of choice for most U.S. students, as well, with 56% of U.S. students choosing to study in European countries in the 2018-19 academic year. In comparison, **although LAC is the second most popular host region for U.S. students, it received only 14% of visiting students in the 2018-2019 academic year.** At the launch of the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* initiative in 2014, 64,000 students from Latin America and the Caribbean were studying in the U.S., while only 40,000 U.S. students were visiting Latin American countries⁴. According to the most recent Open Doors reports, in the 2018-2020 academic years these numbers increased to 80,204 LAC students (25% growth) and 47,954 U.S. students (19% growth), respectively.

Despite the difference in student trajectories, mobility across the hemisphere overall remains low and the opportunities that come with it, unexplored.

The 100,000 Strong in the Americas Model

100,000 Strong in the Americas (100K) is a hemisphere-wide education initiative that leverages the power of both the private and public sectors, as well as the higher education community, to create partnerships, increase

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE OF U.S. STUDENTS STUDYING ABROAD BY RACE/ETHNIC GROUP (2018-2019)

Source: NAFSA "Trends in U.S. Study Abroad" based on IIE data.

RACE/ETHNICITY	U.S. POSTSECONDARY ENROLLMENT 2018-19	U.S. STUDENTS ABROAD 2018-19
African American or Black	13.40	6.40
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.30	8.90
Caucasian	55.20	68.70
Hispanic/Latin American	19.50	10.90
Multiracial	3.90	4.70
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.70	0.40

student exchange and training programs, strengthen education cooperation and contribute to the development of the region's workforce.

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs (WHA) at the U.S. Department of State (DOS), under cooperative agreements and in collaboration with Partners of the Americas (POA), developed and manage the 100K Innovation Fund (100K Fund). The 100K Fund is a public-private sector collaboration that engages the contributions of companies, foundations, regional government entities, and higher education institutions (HEIs) throughout the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

The 100K Fund supports the creation of innovative, sustainable institutional partnerships and student training and exchange programs that align with WHA/DOS priorities of education, workforce development, and inclusive economic development. As of January 2021, the 100K Fund has awarded 243 grants (of \$25,000 to \$45,000 each) to 495 HEIs working in teams, in 25 countries and 49 U.S. states and territories. Thus far, almost 10,000 students have participated in training and exchange programs and workforce development opportunities that were created with the support of 100K grants. Currently, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, Peru, Argentina, Chile, and Guatemala are the leading 100K grant-recipient countries to partner with U.S. universities, colleges, and community colleges.

100K programs are supported by the 100K Fund, a cross-sectorial network of donor-partners, and cost-shared by grant-winning HEI teams. Each 100K grant competition is sponsored in part by one or more donor-partners, and often by funds from WHA/DOS. The winning HEI teams also

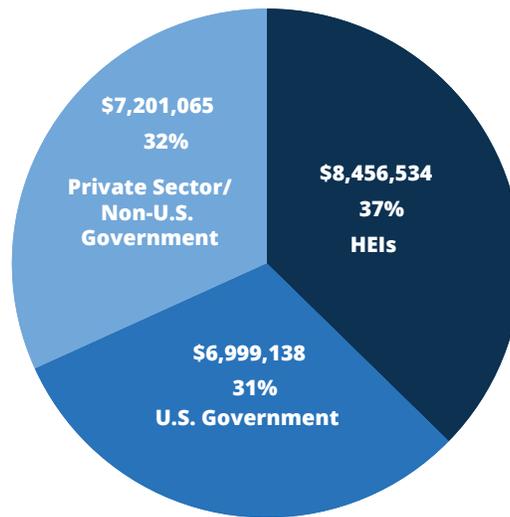
commit additional resources, matching 100K grants by an average of \$1.80 for each dollar provided (see Graph 1).

After emerging as a presidential mandate, in seven years (2013-2020), the 100K Fund has grown into a robust public-private partnership with over \$22M in contributions. This public-private partnership includes \$7M in contributions from WHA/DOS, which have helped leverage over \$7M from 100K grant-winning HEIs in USA and WHA; \$1.5M from regional government public sector education entities; and over \$3M and \$2.5M from private sector companies and foundations respectively. As such, the 100K Fund is the largest public-private effort to develop and support institutional partnerships for academic exchange and training programs between the United States and Latin America and Caribbean.

As shown in Table 2,⁵ the 100K model seeks to leverage long-term innovation through short-term grants by building institutional capacity in winning HEIs and stimulating private and public sector investments to support intra-regional mobility and access to education and exchanges. The overarching goals for the 100K Fund are (a) to increase the number and diversity of students in the Americas who have access to innovative academic training opportunities to gain technical, linguistic and inter-cultural skills while preparing for regional workforce; (b) to promote innovative, sustainable partnerships between HEIs in the U.S. and the rest of the Western Hemisphere; and (c) to increase HEI partnerships and innovative student exchange and training programs that align with WHA/DOS policy goals and programming.

GRAPH 1: CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE 100K FUND PER SECTOR (2013-2020)

Source: POA & WHA/DOS official figures.



To achieve these goals, the 100K Fund relies on the commitment of winning institutions to invest in their partnerships and in the diversification of participating students, as well as on the thematic interest and alignment of donor-partners with the goals of the program. To ensure this, competing institutions' proposals are assessed in terms of their level of innovation, their capacity for sustainability and cost-sharing, their commitment to cooperation, as well as their plans for implementing a Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) lens in their student recruitment. Additionally, POA, in coordination with WHA/DOS and U.S. embassies, provides technical assistance and training to HEIs through workshops and individualized support.

WHA/DOS and POA work closely with the 100K Fund's donor-partners to define competition thematic areas, countries of interest, and often participate in the grant proposal review process. Generally, the grant competition themes are aligned specifically with workforce development and regional development goals of the donor-partners and WHA/DOS. Finally, through assessments of their own, and independent studies such as this, WHA and POA continuously evaluate the impact of 100K and share these findings with current and prospective donor-partners in order to nurture current partnerships and attract investment.

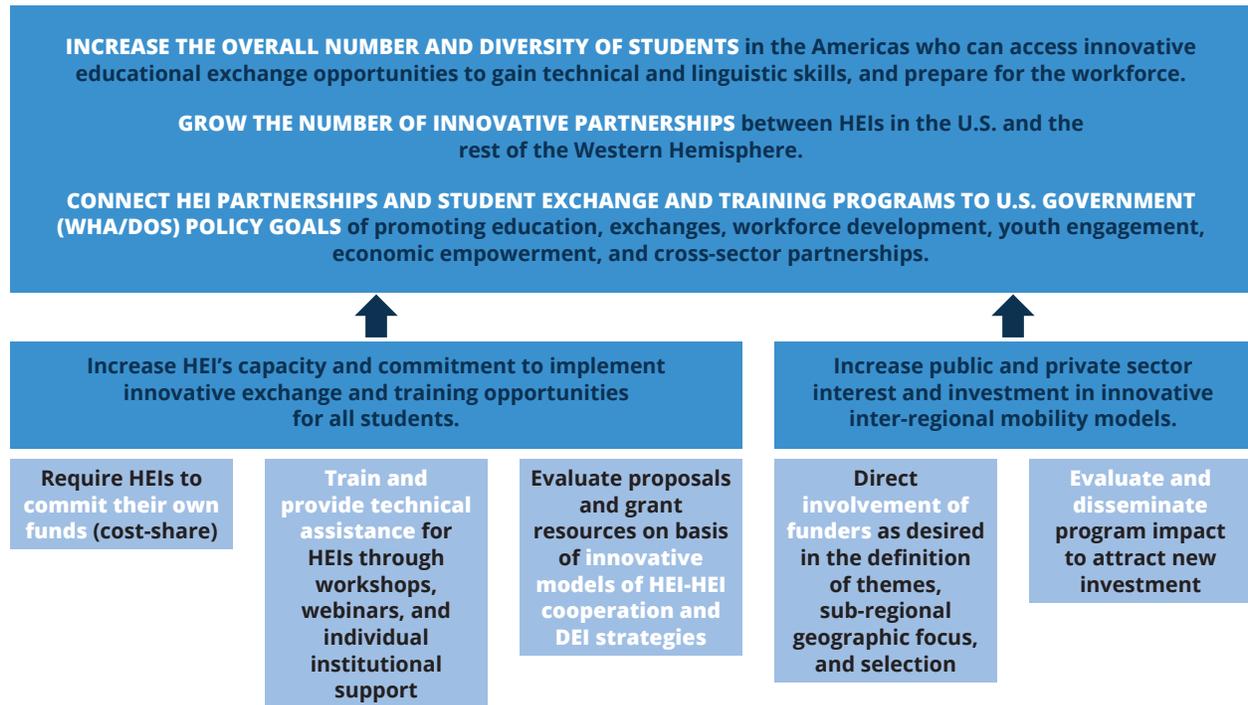
Study Objectives

Previous evaluations of the 100K Fund have highlighted the program's effectiveness in (a) catalyzing programmatic growth and sustainable partnerships among winning HEIs and (b) reaching under-represented and under-resourced student groups. A 2016 study found that in six out of the ten innovation grants evaluated, HEIs were able to maintain their partnerships and even implement new agreements that outlasted the program's funding.⁶ Another 2016 study conducted by NAFSA supported these findings and added that their participation in the 100K Fund helped HEIs better engage faculty and departmental leaders, foster academic collaborations and elevate the profile and prestige of their study abroad programs.⁷ The findings of this latter study also supported the effectiveness of focusing on HEIs as the grantees, instead of on individual students, to encourage institutional commitment—financial and otherwise—and lasting institutional capacity development.

A second NAFSA study from 2017 shows that innovation grants have been successful in increasing the diversity of students who participate in academic exchanges. Over 96% of the surveyed HEIs reported that new student populations were able to study abroad as a result of the grant, including lower income populations and historically underrepresented groups.⁸ A 2019 evaluation of the 100K Fund similarly concludes that the grant competition structure was successful in promoting a diversity and inclusion angle in the recruitment process, which focused

TABLE 2: LOGIC MODEL OF 100,000 STRONG IN THE AMERICAS

Source: Adapted and expanded from the logic model presented in Villanueva and Shepard (2016).



on ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status, more so than other study abroad opportunities.⁹

Building on previous findings, this report evaluates the fund's overall success in achieving its objectives, while focusing on previously uncharted areas of impact, such as specific student-level outcomes (ex. skills development, future mobility and professional opportunities), donor-partner engagement and perceived benefits. This study also offers an additional key perspective by amplifying the voice of LAC grantees alongside U.S. grantees, and drawing a comparative analysis of their experiences. This report focuses on three areas where a multi-dimensional, comparative examination sheds light on new and formerly unexplored issues for the 100K Fund:

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS

Evaluating the impact of the educational and training opportunities that 100K-funded programs offer students, especially to those who otherwise would not be able to participate in international education.

Although grant competitions and funding occur at the institutional level, the core beneficiaries are students, for whom participation in international academic exchanges can have a truly life-changing impact. By focusing primarily on impact at the institutional level, previous studies have not fully captured the experiences of participating students or the short- and long-term impact the 100K-funded program may have had on their skills and professional development. By conducting two student focus groups and drawing from HEIs' survey data, this study illustrates the impact of the 100K-funded programs on student outcomes, while exploring the potential challenges for the effective implementation 100K's DEI strategy.

Section II of the report answers the following research questions about student development and access:

- How has the 100K Fund helped to sustainably address bottlenecks and barriers that might prevent students from participating in international education exchange and training programs between Latin America and the U.S.?

- How has the 100K Fund changed student outcomes and created future opportunities for mobility and/or professional development?
- To what extent have 100K-funded programs helped diversify the demographic profile of students participating in international academic exchanges?

HEI DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

Comparatively exploring the short-term and long-term outcomes of LAC and U.S. HEIs' participation in the 100K Fund.

Although previous studies have at times included the experiences of LAC HEIs, they have primarily focused on evaluating the impact of the 100K experience on U.S. higher education institutions. A 2019 study includes survey and interview data from Latin American and Caribbean HEIs but it does not disaggregate findings or comparatively analyze the unique experiences of institutions from each region. Drawing on survey data from 57 U.S. HEIs and 59 LAC HEIs, as well as the findings from two focus groups with faculty, staff and administrators, this study examines and contrasts the specific ways in which these institutions leverage their grants to develop new programs and sustain partnerships beyond the period of 100K grant funding.

Section III of this report answers the following set of research questions on HEIs' development and comparative impact:

- What impact do 100K grants have on the institutions' readiness, interest level, and resources for international exchange programming?
- Do new initiatives, programs, and partnerships funded through the 100K Fund remain sustainable beyond the period of grant funding?
- What, if any, variation exists in the challenges, benefits, and overall experience of implementing a 100K grant for HEIs in Latin America and the Caribbean in comparison to HEIs in the United States?

DONOR-PARTNER MOTIVATIONS AND PERCEIVED IMPACT

Examining donor-partners' criteria for participation and perceived return on investment for their collaboration across sectors with the 100K Fund.

Donor-partners have a central role in supporting the 100K Fund—yet previous studies have not systematically assessed their motivations, level of satisfaction with the impact of the program, or potential opportunities to maximize their contribution and engagement. Through survey data collected from a sample of twelve donors and eight interviews with a sub-group of public-sector and private-sector funders, this evaluation examines the perceived benefits and incentives of investing in the 100K Fund. The section concludes with a set of recommendations on ways that the 100K Fund could attract new investment, build on existing relationships and continue to engage these critical actors to support 100K's goals.

Section IV on donor-partner engagement focuses on the following questions:

- What do donor-partners perceive to be the primary value generated by their collaboration with and investment in the 100K Fund?
- What strategic interests are met for LAC national government institutions relative to private sector donor-partners through collaboration and investment in the 100K Fund?
- How can the existing network of donor-partners be further leveraged to support the 100K Fund's overall goals and create meaningful, skills-oriented training programs for students?

Analytical Approach

This report is organized around three areas, and subsequent research questions, as they align with the overall goal and objectives of the 100K Fund (see Table 3). The impact of 100K-funded programs on student outcomes is evaluated in terms of (a) changes in access and the inclusion of underrepresented groups, (b) skills development outcomes, and (c) future opportunities for mobility and development that may result from students' participation in the program. The impact on HEIs is evaluated across two areas: (a) internal development (capacity building for future programming, inter-departmental collaboration, and leadership buy-in) and (b) external development—including HEI-HEI partnership sustainability and HEIs' relationship with sponsoring funders. Finally, the fund's impact on donor-partners is measured by (a) institutional and strategic benefits generated by their investment (e.g., strengthened

TABLE 3: ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Source: Compiled by IAD.

RESEARCH AREAS	IMPACT INDICATORS	DATA SOURCE
Student Development and Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and inclusion • Technical and soft skills development • Participation in future development opportunities and mobility 	HEI surveys and student focus groups
HEI Institutional Development and Growth	<p>Internal development indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and programmatic growth • Inter-departmental & research collaborations • Leadership and administrative buy-in 	HEI surveys and HEI focus groups
	<p>External, partnership development indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEI-HEI partnership sustainability • HEI-donor relationship development 	
Donor-partner Engagement and Perceived Impact	<p>Strategic and institutional impact indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship with U.S. government institutions • Relationships with U.S. and LAC HEIs • Reputational growth and brand recognition 	Donor-partner surveys and interviews
	<p>Perceived impact indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student development • HEI development and academic exchange 	

relationships with U.S. government, NGOs, HEIs and reputational growth and benefits) and (b) their perceived impact on students and HEIs. A comparative lens is used to explore the varying impacts on Latin American and U.S. grantees, as well as between public and private sector donor-partners.

Beyond evaluating the impact of the 100K Fund on these key indicators, this report explores the criteria for participation and the key challenges encountered by students, HEIs, and funders in their experience with 100K. The report concludes with a set of recommendations to expand and further leverage the 100K Fund to create more opportunities for student development.

Methodological Note

The data to inform this evaluation was collected over a period of five months through qualitative and quantitative methods, including two sets of surveys, four focus groups and eight interviews. First, two sets of surveys were

launched, in English and Spanish, and distributed to all winning HEIs and 20 of the contributing funders since the program’s inception. Based on the survey responses, a smaller group of HEI representatives and donor-partners were selected to participate in a focus group and to be interviewed, respectively. In their grantee survey, HEIs were asked to provide a list of student participants, which were used to compile a student database and later select a number of candidates to create two representative focus groups (one including U.S. students and another including LAC students), based on their gender, race, major of study, institution and year of participation, among other characteristics.

The grantee survey was shared with a total of 151 LAC HEIs and 206 U.S. HEIs and yielded 59 and 57 responses respectively. The sample of respondents was generally representative of the overall grantee pool in terms of countries, U.S. states and institution type (research universities, technical institutes or community colleges, public, private or Catholic universities), but it lacked representation of grantees from the first 1-3 years of competitions, primarily because 100K program leads were

likely to have moved on to other jobs and there was no longer a consistent point-of-contact. The grantee survey asked HEI representatives to identify the challenges they faced when developing a study abroad program (institutional capacity, student interest or external difficulties such as lack of existing partnerships), the benefits of their participation in the 100K Fund and to share the demographics of their participating students. A second version of the survey was designed for grantees whose exchange program had not yet taken place.

Since 2013, 28 sets of donor-partners have contributed to the 100K Fund. The donor-partner survey was distributed to 20 funders from the public and private sector, in Spanish and English, and yielded 12 responses in total. The sample of respondents was representative of the overall pool in terms of industry, with a slight over-representation from public sector donor-partners and Latin American donor-partners. The purpose of the survey was to gather information about their criteria for investment, the benefits generated and the areas of improvement within the model, as well as general data on their recruitment needs and suggested areas for students' skills development.

The protocols for the focus groups were developed to probe and to triangulate the data gathered through the grantee survey with data from HEI representatives and students. The participants were sampled to represent the characteristics of the overall pool of grantees, including a diversity of countries and states, gender, race, institution type and year of participation, and additionally, for students—their major of study, professional status and age (see Table 4). There was no systematic attempt to invite students who studied in the sampled HEIs or vice-versa. In the focus groups, grantees and students were asked to reflect on their criteria for participation, the challenges they faced, the short-term and long-term impact of their participation and the areas for improvement within the 100K experience.

Lastly, eight, one-hour interviews were conducted with 100K Fund donor-partners to further explore the results of the survey. All of the interviewees also responded to the donor-partner survey. Four interviews were conducted with the representatives of Latin American governmental entities that have previously partnered with the 100K Fund. The remaining interviews involved four private sector donor-partners that represented a range of industries and countries in the 100K Fund's contributor pool. The donor-

TABLE 4: FOCUS GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Compiled by IAD.

	DURATION	LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN	UNITED STATES
HEIS	110 minutes	8 HEI representatives	7 HEI representatives
		8 institutions Representing Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru	7 institutions 5 states 2 community colleges 1 technical college 3 four-year public universities 1 private university
STUDENTS	120 minutes	8 students	7 Students
		7 institutions Representing Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru 3 from Catholic and/or private universities 4 from public/national universities	6 Institutions 6 states 1 from a community college 1 from a technical institute 2 from Catholic/private research universities 2 from public and/or state universities

partners interviewed represented the banking industry, the extractive industry, foundations and non-profits (see Table 5).

There were three main **limitations to this methodological approach** that, although did not significantly affect or bias the findings of the evaluation, should be noted:

- In distributing the surveys to HEIs, there were a number of coordinator or administrator contacts that could not be reached (21 in LAC and 20 in the U.S.). Most of them represented grantees from the program’s early years who had since relocated or updated their contact information. Due to this, the grantee survey data is less representative of early year participants than of recent participants’ experiences.
- Due to the lack of a centralized database for participating students, student contacts were compiled with the information that HEIs chose to share on their survey responses. As such, the pool of students from which focus group participants were drawn was already pre-selected based on HEI survey responses and not necessarily representative of all 100K student alumni. Additionally, the majority of student participants had been participants in the last 1 to 3 years.
- A few interviewees and focus group participants had not yet completed their exchange program, some due to the COVID-19 pandemic and some because they had only recently received their grant. This was the case for one HEI representative from LAC and one from the U.S., as well as two donor-partner interviewees.

TABLE 5: DONOR-PARTNER INTERVIEW SAMPLE

Source: Compiled by IAD.

PUBLIC DONOR-PARTNER INTERVIEWEES	PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER INTERVIEWEES
4 interviews, 7 interviewees	4 interviews, 5 interviewees
4 governmental Institutions	2 larger, transnational companies
2 higher education focused	2 smaller, national organizations
2 technical training and research focused	3 different industries:
2 governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking • Philanthropy • Extractive industries
	Based in 3 different countries

II. STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESS

Despite their short-term nature, 100K-funded programs have undoubtedly had a lasting, catalytic impact on the academic and professional development, as well as the future trajectories, of participating students. Students' experiences with 100K-funded programs are inevitably varied, given the array of themes and objectives defined by their institutions' partnerships. Although there is no single story that captures the 100K student experience, this section evaluates the 100K Fund's impact on students using three common indicators: increased access and inclusion, subject-specific and cross-cutting skills development and future development and mobility opportunities.

Accounting for the variance within these groups, the program's outcomes for LAC students still differ systematically from those of U.S. students, in all three impact areas. In terms of expanding access and promoting inclusion, U.S. and LAC HEIs encountered barriers that limited their efforts to implement DEI selection and recruitment strategies, which resulted in a much more competitive selection process for LAC students than for U.S. students. **Selected participants, both in the U.S. and LAC, were able to hone their subject-specific skills, as well as their inter-cultural communication and linguistic skills, through exposure to new contexts, work modalities, academic discourses and technological innovation.** Generally, however, LAC students focused on forming lasting professional and academic connections and importing new research ideas, while U.S. students sought to practically apply their technical expertise in a new context. In the long-term, while all students successfully maintained collaborative networks intra-regionally, but there is more evidence of increased future mobility across the hemisphere among Latin American and Caribbean students.

The following findings are based on data from student focus groups, HEI representatives focus groups, and HEI survey data, disaggregated by U.S. and LAC experiences. To evaluate the extent to which the 100K Fund has successfully expanded access and opportunities for underrepresented students, both students and HEIs were asked to describe their recruitment and selection processes, as well as to what extent they made a concerted effort to

reach students from traditionally marginalized groups. During the focus group discussions, students self-assessed the impact of 100K-funded programs on their technical or subject-specific skills, their linguistic and soft skills, and overall professional preparedness. These findings were also complemented with survey and focus group data from HEIs.

Expanding Access and Inclusion

100K student cohorts are consistently more diverse than the average study abroad population at their institution, yet a few systematic barriers still limit the successful implementation of DEI strategies.

100K grants often place student diversity and inclusion at the core of the programs they fund. As a result, **100K cohorts are consistently more diverse than the overall student population in their institutions, as well as other study abroad programs.** Nonetheless, at times, institutions' inclusion-focused promotion, recruitment and selection processes are not always as successful as they may hope. On average, U.S. HEIs are slightly more successful than LAC HEIs at recruiting underrepresented students, despite lower interest levels among their students.¹⁰ Due to smaller candidate pools, U.S. HEIs often employ more targeted strategies to ensure the inclusion of certain student groups. On the other hand, LAC HEIs report the need to enforce rigid selection processes in order to manage the outpouring of interest from their students, which have at times negatively affected their inclusion and diversity efforts. At all stages of this process, including promotion of the opportunity, selection, and recruitment, HEIs—and students—identify several limitations as well as effective strategies that can help improve their efforts to expand access.

Surveyed HEIs reported on a few demographic indicators about the student cohorts that participated in their 100K-funded programs, including gender, racial and ethnic

identity, socioeconomic background, first-generation status, and disability (see Graph 2).¹¹ According to the survey respondents, an average of 58% of participating students from U.S. HEIs were identified as racial minorities, 61% came from low-income backgrounds, and 46% were first generation students. Given that the enrollment of racial minorities in U.S. higher education averaged 32% in the 2018-19 academic year, participating institutions have certainly been successful in increasing access for minorities through their 100K grants. **Notably, surveyed U.S. HEIs report that their 100K cohorts include racial minority student at a rate that is 52 percentage points higher than U.S. average study abroad programs.** According to surveyed HEIs, however, only 4% of 100K's participating students had some form of disability compared to the national average of 10.5% of higher education students who study abroad.¹² In terms of gender, most surveyed HEIs in the U.S. have reached gender parity in their student cohorts, except for a few that, on average, did not favor any gender.

The majority of LAC HEIs prioritize low-income status as a criterion for their targeted inclusion strategies, more so than specific ethnic or racial groups. Ethnic and racial categories, as well as minority status, are defined differently across countries or even across institutions within the same country, although there is some degree of consensus around indigenous identities. **On average, LAC**

HEIs reported that 23% of their participating students were of indigenous descent or otherwise classified as a racial or ethnic minority. Additionally, **an average of 55% of all participating students came from low-income households and 37% were first-generation students.** Most of the surveyed LAC HEIs did not achieve gender parity within their cohorts—especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs and/or programs housed in technical institutes, in which the percentages of male students were significantly higher. The gender imbalance in some of these student cohorts is generally representative of the overall enrollment statistics in STEM careers in the region.¹³

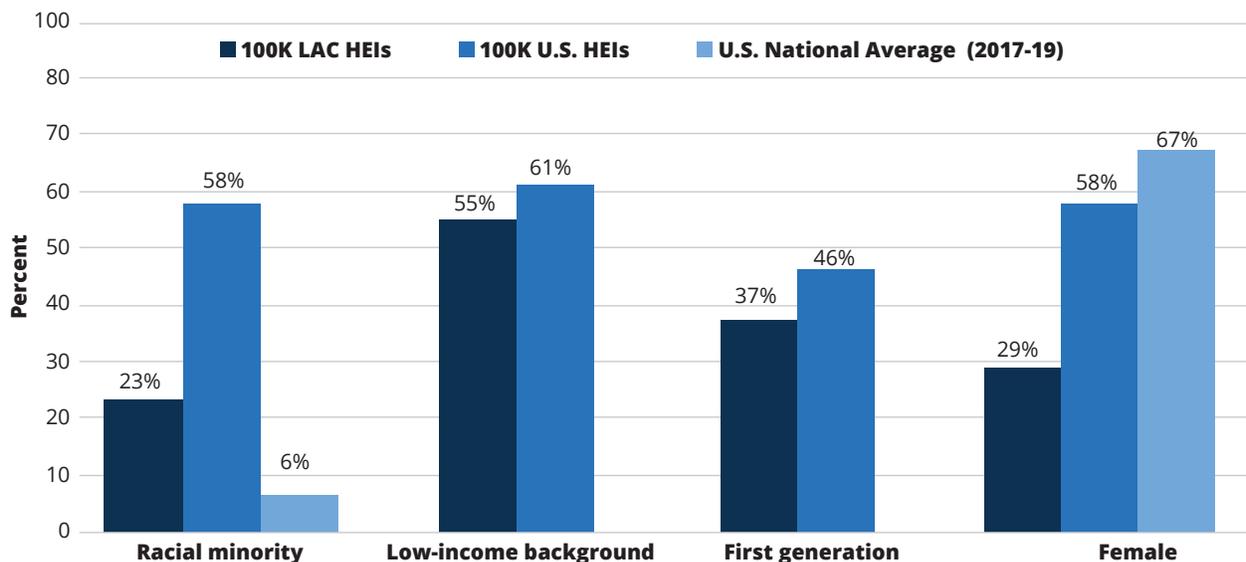
HEI RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION STRATEGIES

Limited student interest in the U.S. and competitive language requirements in LAC have hindered HEIs' efforts to be inclusive in their recruitment and selection strategies.

Despite concerted efforts and success, HEIs still identified a few barriers that hindered their ability to effectively implement explicit DEI strategies in the recruitment and selection of underrepresented students—namely students' language abilities or their interest in the region, competing

GRAPH 2: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY ABROAD PARTICIPANTS

Source: Compiled by IAD based on survey data, with disaggregated data from IIE's Open Door reports 2017-2019.



Note: There is no data available on low-income or first-generation U.S. students studying abroad at the national level. There is no regional demographic data available on LAC students studying abroad at the regional level.

student responsibilities, associated costs and visa or travel restrictions. Firstly, the language barrier can be a deterrent or limitation for students from both the U.S. and LAC to participate in 100K-funded programs. U.S. students are often less interested in applying due to the language barrier, while Latin American or Caribbean candidates, while highly motivated, may not meet the program or course's minimum language requirements. Additionally, Latin America and the Caribbean are not commonly featured regions in study abroad programming for many U.S. HEIs and can seem unfamiliar or uninteresting to enrolled students.

"Sometimes money isn't the answer to getting our students to go abroad. We weren't expecting to get so few students to sign up for these programs. It could've been that these new interesting destinations weren't familiar to them, to their culture, that there were language barriers. Even offering them these stipends to participate [...] that proved to be the hurdle that we struggled the most with." —U.S. COMMUNITY COLLEGE

REPRESENTATIVE

Indeed, on average, only 14% of enrolled U.S. students who studied abroad in 2018-19 chose a destination in LAC. Secondly, competing responsibilities, such as work or family commitments and academic demands, can be a barrier to U.S. students studying abroad.

"We thought providing these stipends would be very easy, and we'd written into the grant that at least half of our participants would be from underrepresented groups, and that proved very difficult. I think there are students who just have so many obligations with work, with family, just not on a mindset of, 'I can take off -days to go to an unfamiliar country.' We ended up structuring it so that anybody in the class taught by this one professor would travel." —FOUR-YEAR, U.S. HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Associated costs that are not fully covered by the grant can often exclude LAC students in the lowest socioeconomic quintiles, who might otherwise be interested in the program—these include costs associated with visa processing. Similarly, in many cases, eligibility for visas also affects LAC students' ability to participate in the program.

"The only thing we asked students to pay for was their visa, as well as for their passport for those who did not have one, and even though we are talking about 300 dollars in total, for many it was very difficult to obtain them" —CENTRAL AMERICAN

HEI REPRESENTATIVE

As a result of these barriers, winning HEIs confronted two opposing issues: high levels of student interest in Latin American and Caribbean institutions led to competitive selection processes while insufficient student interest in U.S. institutions forced creative recruitment solutions. For many HEIs, the recruitment and selection processes were not as inclusive as institutions intended them to be. In the U.S., too little interest from students kept HEIs from being able to effectively enforce strict DEI selection criteria, and instead, all students who were interested in participating were selected to do so, or students were otherwise recruited directly based on other criteria, such as academic interest. The lack of student interest was particularly common in community colleges and graduate schools, where students are older, on average, and may have competing responsibilities. To address this, some U.S. HEIs incorporated their 100K programs into a class or major's curricular requirement, and as such, created a self-selecting group. As a strategy to improve upon DEI efforts, some institutions also employed a more targeted approach which proved successful in including the underrepresented students they sought to reach.

"We learned from that first year that money doesn't always do it for the students, so in our second year, [...] rather than casting a wide net and not getting the responses we were looking for, [we] were thinking about who might be interested in something like that, so when we received the grant, [we] went up to some individuals to discuss the opportunity. It was a challenge to get them to sign on, but we were able to target some individuals who wouldn't otherwise be able to participate on the program." —FOUR-YEAR, U.S. HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Conversely, LAC HEIs often implemented strict selection processes that focused on academic and linguistic proficiency, and to some extent constricted their focus on DEI, partly due to the surplus of interested candidates but also to ensure candidates had sufficient linguistic capabilities to study abroad in the U.S. A few institutions also justified their non-explicit approach to DEI by noting that students from low socioeconomic households or racial minorities either already made up a high proportion of their student population or were heavily overrepresented and therefore would naturally be included among the selected participants. All of the LAC institutions in the focus group followed a similar selection process, including a pre-selection stage to ensure students met the minimum academic and English skills requirements, and in some cases, to check their eligibility for a visa and at least an additional two cycles of shortlisting. Some institutions required interviews, statements of purpose, or even

professor recommendations instead of grade averages, while others required the completion of a course or a few community service hours related to the theme of the program (see Box 1).

English language proficiency was usually a prerequisite for selecting candidates in LAC HEIs. However, in many of these institutions’ contexts, English language proficiency is strongly correlated with higher socioeconomic status and extra-curricular support. As such, selection processes focusing on linguistic proficiency can inadvertently favor students from more privileged backgrounds and systematically limit institutions’ ability to reach their DEI targets.¹⁴ Eligibility for a visa, as well as the possession of a passport—or the funds to acquire either document—can similarly be a privilege that is not systematically afforded to all, particularly in Central American countries. These issues are identified as significant barriers to ensuring diversity in participating LAC students.

“We also have a process that starts with a pre-selection based on minimum requirements such as English language and the viability of them obtaining visa and passport, because in the end, that is a limitation—it is not a simple process and it is not a process that everyone can easily get through at the Embassy” —CENTRAL AMERICAN HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Host universities in the U.S. also noted visa processing issues as a considerable challenge for their incoming students, which, they agree, does not affect more privileged students who may have already travelled abroad and received a visa.

“It was stressful for the students, and it privileges those that already have privilege and that already have a visa, you have to have certain resources. Students without all the requirements who would benefit from the experience can be left out because of this lack of support.” —FOUR-YEAR, U.S. HEI REPRESENTATIVE

BOX 1: LAC HEI SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS

1. Pre-selection (long-listing)

- Candidate must have good academic standing in general, and/or in the program’s subject area
- Candidate must meet a minimum required level of English language skills
- Candidate must possess or be able to request a passport, and be eligible for a visa to travel to the U.S.

2. Screening (short-listing)

- Committee interviews long-listed candidates to understand their motivation for participating
- Candidates submit a statement of purpose
- Professors submit recommendation and opinion

3. Selection

- Committee selects participating students
- Committee waitlists a few students to participate in case selected students are unable to travel (e.g., due to visa issues)

4. Preparation requirements

- Students must complete several workshops about visa processing, traveling, or general preparation
- Students must complete a class, or a number of community service hours related to the program’s theme

Note: This box provides a general description of the selection and recruitment strategies among LAC HEIs, but is not meant to represent a uniform process for all institutions.

Despite these barriers, both LAC and U.S. HEIs continue to engineer innovative strategies to achieve their DEI goals. On average, HEIs have been particularly successful in recruiting a comparatively high percentage of racial minority students in 100K-funded program cohorts.

STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

Word-of-mouth promotion and project- or subject-based criteria for recruitment and selection

According to participating students from both the U.S. and LAC countries, **the main promotion and recruitment channels for their 100K-funded program were student word-of-mouth and ties to professors or specific departments.** Five out of eight U.S. students in the focus group recalled being directly approached by administrators or professors about their program and generally agree that it was not extensively advertised—particularly beyond their departments or majors. Of the remaining three, only one of them learned about the program through a non-departmental or subject-based channel, namely the study abroad office. In the case of HEIs that were offering the same program for a second or third time, students also learned about the opportunity through students who had previously participated. Given the recruitment channels, the most common reasons for U.S. students to participate were (a) their subject or research area of interest and the opportunity to apply their knowledge in a different context, (b) specific research projects, or in fewer cases, (c) a preference over other regions in order to practice their Spanish language skills.

“They were doing a project on natural gas in the Patagonia region which is what really attracted me since that’s what I study—being able to relate what the program is about goes a long way when choosing between opportunities”

—ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING STUDENT

Students in Latin American and Caribbean institutions heard about this opportunity through similar channels, based on their major and the nature of the program. For instance, three students in the focus group were approached directly by professors, four learned about the opportunity through departmental promotion, and one student read about it in a university-wide institutional mailing. Although most calls for applications received a significant amount of interested candidates, students agree that more extensive promotion through diverse channels might have helped expand and diversify the

candidate pool further. Similarly, students suggested that selection criteria should focus more on participants’ interest and character, and less on their grade average, which might encourage more under-represented students to apply. As is the case in U.S. institutions, given the promotion and selection channels, **most students in Latin American and Caribbean institutions chose to participate in 100K-funded programs because they were directly related to their major or a specific research project they are working on.** Two students in the focus group offered different criteria, including (a) exploring post-graduation options—namely graduate level-study in the U.S. versus entering the workforce, and (b) to gain some professional experience and connections with transnational corporations.

“My only two choices were Argentina or Ireland and I was taking two Spanish classes so it made sense for me to go to Argentina” —HISTORY AND PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT

Even though the selection processes were not as competitive for U.S. students—in fact, half of the focus group participants did not need to go through a formal application process—the grant did reach students who would not have otherwise been able to travel. Focus group participants either had not travelled outside of the U.S. themselves or were able to identify several students within their cohort who had not. They also recognized that even with the more self-selective recruitment processes, professors in their departments or research projects tried to reach students who had not had the opportunity to travel outside of the U.S. before. Similarly, **three out of eight LAC students in the focus group never had a chance to leave their country and would not have been able to without the financial support of the 100K Fund.** Of these three, two students were of indigenous descent, raised in rural communities, and without previous access to financial aid to support their studies or travel before.

“I did not believe in traveling much because I’m a cattle rancher here in the state of Yucatán [Mexico] and I didn’t think that I could leave. But then I thought, why not? The grant is there for a reason. And so, I tried to apply and in the end I was accepted. It was a very impactful experience.” —ENVIRONMENTAL

ENGINEERING STUDENT

Skills Development and Future Trajectories for LAC Students

Technological and Academic exposure as a platform to launch future collaboration, professional development and mobility

Participation in 100K-funded programs was an incredibly catalytic experience for Latin American and Caribbean students. According to the students and staff interviewed for this study, a significant portion of alumni have pursued or intend to pursue additional study abroad opportunities, further education or even job opportunities in the U.S. During their experiences abroad, students were able to learn from and form connections with their host institution's staff and other professionals in their fields and gain practical professional experience. LAC students also gained confidence in their academic and linguistic skills, as well as a new ability to navigate financial aid options for future study and to explore other opportunities for international education and travel. In the long-term, many students have continued to collaborate with host university staff or have leveraged their experience and new connections to advance their professional trajectories.

In their short visits, Latin American and Caribbean students had the opportunity to advance their subject-specific skills and knowledge through exposure to technological innovation and paradigms that were not available at their home university. For half of the students in the LAC focus group, the core of their programs consisted of visiting campus facilities at their U.S. host institutions, including laboratories and research centers, and learning about their projects, ranging from cutting-edge 3D vinyl printing technology to innovative irrigation technology. For students majoring in subject areas other than STEM, attending classes or conferences on their topics of interest was similarly revealing. For instance, a student from Peru was able to learn about the latest research in behavioral economics from the faculty at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which later informed his thesis research. Returning to their own institutions with enriched understanding of their fields of study was incredibly valuable to students, especially when they had the chance to share their experiences with their peers upon their return.

"I study behavioral economics, which in Latin America is something very new, very recent, and when I found out that this has been a part of U.S. universities' curriculum since 2003, it was a shock. It is a very different reality—and learning about the newest developments in this field of economics, which only gained global relevance around 2016, was very valuable for my own research." —ECONOMICS STUDENT

Similarly, for other students from Latin America and the Caribbean, **100K-funded programs offered them the opportunity to explore potential professional trajectories within their field, and a chance to gain applied professional experience in a specialized topic.** During their visit at the Saint Peter's University in New Jersey, two students from Argentina majoring in international trade and marketing had the chance to visit vastly different organizations that are key actors in their field, and that potentially define the kinds of professional trajectories available to them. These included the World Trade Organization, the United Nations, Amazon, UPS, and the U.S. headquarters of Santander Bank. Another student participated in a 100K-funded internship at the University of California, Santa Cruz's Creative Coding Lab, which allowed him to gain professional and practical experience in design thinking and user-friendly interface programming — a highly specialized career which he was able to pursue upon his return to Colombia. These experiences were deemed extremely valuable in helping students define and pursue the careers they wanted.

In addition to building their subject-specific skills and knowledge, **Latin American and Caribbean students gained a variety of soft skills including (a) inter-cultural communication, (b) financial aid literacy and (c) increased confidence in their academic capacity** as a result of their participation in 100K-funded programs. According to students in the focus group, collaborating with peers from U.S. institutions on research or academic tasks exposed clear differences in working styles and approaches to teamwork, which ultimately led to improved interpersonal skills. For example, one former student traced her success in her current position, which involves working with clients and experts from all over the world, to her experience with cross-cultural collaboration during the 100K-funded exchange.

SPOTLIGHT:

A STUDENT FROM LA UNIVERSIDAD DEL VALLE DE GUATEMALA VISITS MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Mateo is a mechanical engineering student in his third year at university who participated in a department-led initiative to visit and learn from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) multi-disciplinary approach to engineering and their focus on engineering for global development. The trip lasted two weeks.

SELECTION AND FUNDING

The university's Department of Engineering was looking to select a diverse team that represented all branches of engineering—including electrical, environmental, civil and mechanical. Mateo joined the cohort last, as the only mechanical engineer, after being approached by professors and peers, who encouraged him to apply. The application was less focused on grade averages and more on assessing his level of interest and general character. He had to submit a statement of purpose and two letters of recommendation from professors. All the students in his cohort received some financial aid, scaled according to their need.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Being exposed to the innovative approaches and technology at MIT transformed Mateo's perspective on his own professional trajectory. His cohort was able to learn about the new trends in additive manufacturing and form connections with MIT professors who were focused on their topics of interest. His visit to MIT's Development Lab was similarly inspiring:

"For me, something that changed my vision for the rest of my life was our visit to the D-Lab. It struck me to see a center totally dedicated to the development and improvement of the world. Guatemala needs one of those. I believe that all of Latin America needs one of those [...] Since then, my aspiration has always been to create a D-Lab for my country."

CHALLENGES

Mateo, like most students in his cohort, initially lacked confidence in his English skills and general academic preparedness when compared to U.S. students at MIT. In the past, this had stopped his peers from participating in study abroad programs. However, after their visit, Mateo recognized that their academic level was on par with the students in the U.S.

"Meeting the students of MIT made us very nervous—but at the same time it was one of the experiences that impacted us the most, because we were expecting to find only the best of the best, and ultimately, they were normal people. The only difference was that they were very clear on what they wanted, what interested them, and the tools that they needed—even if they came from other majors of study. And it calmed our fears—we can also do it, we can."

LONG-TERM IMPACT

Mateo describes his trip to MIT as life changing. The connections he made with their staff and students outlasted his visit and have resulted in several opportunities for collaboration. In the months after his visit, Mateo collaborated with staff at his home and host universities to develop 3D printed pieces for NASA using an innovative technique he learned at MIT. He is also in direct communication with some of the students and staff in the U.S. who regularly invite him to virtual conferences or share new papers published in the field.

Note: The names used in this report have been changed in order to protect the anonymity and privacy of the informants.

“The solar panel industry is very new in Argentina, and because of this, everyone who works in the industry here is foreign—French or Canadian. Having had this experience, interacting with other cultures and learning how to present oneself in the world of multicultural businesses, prepared me to deal with clients who are not Argentine and who have a very different approach to work.” —MARKETING STUDENT

In addition, prior to 100K, only two students in the LAC focus group had ever previously applied for or won a grant or scholarship for study abroad or research. Since their participation in the program, all of the students in the focus group have either applied for other grants or have learned about the many other financing opportunities available to them and intend to utilize them in the near future. **Receiving the 100K funds was a catalyst for students to search for other opportunities to travel abroad and continue to expand their academic and professional horizons.**

“When visiting the businesses and universities in the U.S., we realized that there is so much financial aid available for people to be able to study abroad and to support these experiences and internships. What I want to do in the future, given this experience, is to apply to work in one of the businesses that I visited there, and to search for grants so I can return to study or work in the U.S.” —COMPUTATIONAL DESIGN STUDENT

Finally, LAC students, as well as their institutional representatives, agree that they suffered from an initial lack of confidence, or a sense of inferiority, in their own academic and linguistic abilities.

“The fear one has, wondering how you will compare to students from the United States, thinking that you are going to study what they are studying—all on top of the language barrier: that was a big, nerve-racking challenge.” —MARKETING STUDENT

Students traced this fear of ineptitude back to common social and cultural narratives about the sub-standard quality of Latin American education and the comparatively low academic achievement within the region. Indeed, **one of the most impactful outcomes of this experience for all students interviewed was the confidence it instilled in their academic capacity, as well as in the education systems and institutions of their respective countries.**

“After returning from our trip, we agreed that studying in the U.S. does not make anyone superior over others [...] you don't need to be special to achieve the academic level of First World countries—each one of us can stand out. You don't need to be in the U.S.—in Latin America there is plenty of academic excellence and the education is not bad, but you need to know how to take advantage of it.” —INTERNATIONAL TRADE STUDENT

Apart from lacking confidence in their academic abilities, Latin American and Caribbean students encountered additional challenges that both overlapped and differed from those of U.S. students, including (a) the language barrier, accompanied by a lack of confidence in their linguistic proficiency and (b) visa processing fears. The language barrier was the primary challenge reported by two-thirds of the LAC students who participated in the focus group. Representatives of other Latin America and Caribbean institutions agreed that the lack of English proficiency, among other factors, diminished some of their students' confidence while abroad. Although all these students had met the medium-to-high English level requirement set by their institutions, some reported that they still felt uncomfortable when speaking in a classroom setting or even in casual conversation with their U.S. peers. Nonetheless, upon completing their program, all students agreed that they had improved their English skills and generally felt more confident in the language. Additionally, two students mentioned that they had initially feared being denied a visa, which was a common challenge that all Latin American, and especially Caribbean, institutional representatives also mentioned. Visa applications usually require students to provide proof of residence, bank account statements or property ownership, which are not necessarily available to all.

In the long term, 100K-funded programs served as platforms to (a) support professional advancement, (b) maintain lasting relationships with scholars from across the hemisphere and ultimately, (c) catalyze further mobility. Although most of the students who participated in this study had not yet entered the labor market, they agreed that their experience with 100K-funded programs has certainly enriched their CVs and helped them advance in professional selection processes. The skills they developed during the programs were also valuable to the jobs that students were pursuing themselves, as in the case of the student who entered the highly globalized industry of solar panel installation. For students who had longer stays in the U.S., the additional time at their host institutions granted them more credibility in their expertise and skills, while helping to prove to their prospective

employers that their English level is high enough to study or work in the U.S. Ultimately, by signaling academic and linguistic excellence and by preparing them with practical skills, LAC students' experiences with 100K-funded programs directly advanced their professional careers.

Secondly, **students highlighted lasting connections with U.S. host university staff and students as one of the most valuable benefits of participation in 100K-funded programs.** Four of the students in the focus group parlayed these connections into research collaborations, while others have used these contacts to stay informed about the latest research trends or conferences on their topics of interest. Latin American and Caribbean students also valued their connections at U.S. institutions because these contacts may be able to support them in future endeavors or serve as a source of general advice. Three students in the focus group recall their host university staff offering to write them recommendation letters if they ever were to apply to graduate-level programs or internships in the U.S. or elsewhere. Similarly, all students have stayed in touch with their U.S. counterparts through social media platforms. In one case, a student from Yucatán regularly communicates with the students he met while at Texas A&M University to discuss class exercises that he might not be able to solve on his own.

"Making new connections with professionals, professors, or students in the U.S. was valuable because in the future, if we all work in the same industry, we might be able to get together and collaborate on a project. Likewise, our host university faculty told us that if we ever need them, they were open to writing letters of recommendations for graduate degree applications or scholarships. It really adds up."

—ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING STUDENT

Lastly, all the students in the focus group agreed that they had developed the confidence and interest to study or work abroad again, as a result of their participation in 100K-funded programs. In fact, one of the students in the focus group had returned to study in the U.S. twice since she was first sponsored through the 100K grant. Four other students have plans to apply to a master's degree, a doctorate program and/or an internship in the U.S. in the near future. **The impact of these students' participation in 100K-funded programs has also been exponentially catalytic in stimulating mobility across the hemisphere, by actively involving other students in 100K-funded programs.** All the students in the focus group reported speaking to other students about their experience and actively trying to encourage them to apply to 100K-funded

programs or other grants to study abroad. This word-of-mouth has caused a **ripple effect** in alumni communities and undeniably helped multiply the already transformative impact that the 100K Fund has had on student mobility.

"With this type of program, we become like lanterns. The first time that I had the opportunity to study abroad, I became a local phenomenon at my university. My community became a local phenomenon, too. And people would come up to me, and they would ask, how did you do it? And you realize that you can share your light with others and motivate the people around you, so that they see that it is not impossible, that you don't need to be special. We all have the capacity and the skills to do it." —CHEMICAL ENGINEERING STUDENT

Skills Development and Future Trajectories for U.S. Students

Practical experience, cross-cultural awareness and expanded interest in Latin American and Caribbean contexts

Compared to their LAC counterparts, there is less evidence of increased future mobility inspired by U.S. students' participation in the program. However, most alumni did develop an increased interest in Latin America as a region and its potential for technological innovation and professional or academic collaborations. 100K-funded exchanges provided U.S. students with the opportunity to gain practical experience in a different context, be exposed to new technology and, for some, deepen their knowledge and interest in the region. In the long term, their participation in 100K-funded programs facilitated lasting research collaborations across the hemisphere and shaped the professional and academic trajectories of some U.S. students to focus on Latin American and Caribbean issues or to apply new perspectives to the issues they address in their own contexts.

Despite their short duration, 100K-funded exchanges offered numerous opportunities for students to develop their subject-specific skills. Like their LAC peers, **these short-term programs enabled U.S. students to hone their technical skills and expand their knowledge in a variety of subjects by (a) exposing them to new technology or innovative models unfamiliar to them and (b) by providing**

them with the opportunity to apply their knowledge and practice their skills in very different, often rural, contexts.

Mechanical and environmental engineering students and those majoring in related fields, in particular, emphasized the value of observing and using new technologies or machinery that was not available on their campuses—such as fine laser cutters or innovative rainwater catchment systems—or to learn about alternative models to address complex technical issues they had studied in their home institutions.

However, almost all students interviewed agreed that the most enriching part of their exchange was being able to experience the theoretical concepts they had studied in their classes applied directly, and often in a very different context. Beyond using and learning about new technologies at their host institutions' campuses, in almost all cases, students had the opportunity to visit local sites and learn about issues that directly related to their area of study. For instance, a natural gas engineering student from the University of West Virginia was able to visit a petroleum drilling site for the very first time in Argentina, while an environmental science student from the University of North Texas was able to visit a plastic recycling plant, also for the first time. Other students also travelled to local towns and villages outside of their host universities, generally in rural areas, which enabled them to gain a better understanding of the regions' geographic and demographic diversity, while practically applying their academic knowledge in a new context.

"I had actually never been to a drilling place at all and I was studying petroleum. When I was in Argentina we got invited by Chevron to go to one of their drilling sites, so that was really great, because it was my first time on a rig [...] seeing what I would probably be doing in the next two to three years of my professional life. That's something that I will always remember." —PETROLEUM AND GAS ENGINEERING STUDENT

In addition to developing subject-specific skills, U.S. students and their institutions' leaders emphasized the impact of 100K-funded programs on their soft skills and academic interests—including (a) an interest in developing regional expertise, (b) empathy and cultural sensitivity, and (c) inter-cultural communication and collaboration. Participating in 100K-funded programs deepened students' understanding of local realities, which in turn sparked their interest in the region's history, politics, and culture. A history student was able to visit a local farm in rural Colombia and learn about their experience with the

guerrilla conflict, which motivated him to pursue further study on this topic upon his return to his home university.

"One of the farms I visited was really interesting because the community was isolated but very self-sufficient; they grew all their own sugar cane, cacao, café, and a lot [of] different crops and sold them back in the city. It was also an area where FARC [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia], which is a rebel or paramilitary group, used to operate. So, they explained to us a lot of the issues that they experienced when FARC were there." —HISTORY AND PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT

Similarly, HEI administrators reported a few students changing their area of study to focus more specifically on Latin American issues or to incorporate new perspectives they learned during their trip.

"I teach global studies, so I'm used to trying to get students to be more empathetic to people around the world, but it was hugely impactful for them to see it firsthand. When we came back, three of our students changed their majors. We had this whole discussion when we came back about how they were going to change their lives, based on what we learned about the environment and sustainability in Latin America."

—U.S. COMMUNITY COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

Secondly, while learning about the region's history and culture, U.S. students developed a greater sense of empathy for the hardships faced by local communities and a newfound sensitivity for cultural diversity issues, even within their own lives. In one case, a cohort of U.S. students, who had travelled to Peru, organized a fundraiser—in collaboration with their host university peers—to raise money for an impoverished rural community they had visited during their trip. Similarly, **representatives from U.S. universities mentioned that 100K-funded programs have helped dispel stereotypes about the Latinx community in the U.S. by developing a greater sense of empathy and cross-cultural awareness in their students.**

"The poverty that they were exposed to in Latin America motivated some U.S. students to take action and fundraise for a rural community they visited. Plus, that group of U.S. students is still in contact with our cohort of students. The cultural and academic richness was on both sides." —LATIN AMERICAN HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Thirdly, participating students were able to initiate collaborative relations with students and staff in their LAC host institutions, which in turn helped improve their inter-

SPOTLIGHT:

A STUDENT FROM CORNELL UNIVERSITY RESEARCHING SUSTAINABLE WATER TREATMENT IN HONDURAS

Marina is an environmental engineering student who has been working with a research group at her university on water treatment and sustainability. The group studied the case of Honduras and has led team trips to Zamorano Pan-American Agricultural School periodically over the years. Given that the trip was only two weeks long, Marina was able to participate without it interfering in her class schedule and responsibilities.

SELECTION AND FUNDING

This was a well-established program at her university and Marina had heard many students describe it as a transformative experience that changed their lives or their perspectives on their work. There was a formal—and somewhat competitive—application process, and some students were waitlisted. When applying to the program, students could choose to fill out an additional application for funding which involved a different set of DEI and need-based questions and requirements.

Funding was an obstacle for many of the students in Marina's cohort, but the university was able to cover a large percentage of the costs through the 100K grant, as well as other scholarships.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The highlight of Marina's trip was her visit to a local community, which enabled her to learn about the feasibility and potential of the water sanitation systems that she had been studying at her home university.

"I really appreciated the opportunity that we had to go to visit the village, talk with their town leaders and learn about [what] their water sanitation issues are and what they are doing about it. It was amazing how much they addressed the things I had learned in school. There was a lot to learn. We could see how engineering techniques that we apply in the U.S. can be applied there or modified so that they can be more sustainable and can improve conditions in places like these."

CHALLENGES

Marina had some knowledge of Spanish, but the language barrier posed the biggest challenge she faced while abroad, especially when understanding or referring to technical terms related to environmental engineering. The Spanish classes offered at her home university did not prepare her for the more technical vocabulary she deemed necessary for the trip.

LONG-TERM IMPACT

The trip shaped Marina's understanding of engineering, as well as the focus of her future academic and professional trajectory. She intends to focus on the intersection between health and environmental engineering in rural or under-served communities, like the one her cohort visited in Honduras, within the United States.

"This trip really sparked my interest in ecological restoration and providing resources for all. I saw the connection between the health of the environment and the health of the people, especially in places that we consider less developed, and it really opened my eyes to what engineering looks like [sic] for the majority of the world. I don't know if I'll work in Latin America later on, but I'm interested in working on Native American reservations and Native American health services. It also taught me a lot about cultural exchange and collaborating with other people and learning from each other and the humility and respect that goes into that."

Note: The names used in this report have been changed in order to protect the anonymity and privacy of the informants.

cultural communication skills. During their trip abroad, U.S. students reported forming strong bonds with their host university peers and, at times, faculty. In most cases, students at their host universities readily included them in social events, introduced them to their cuisine, music and local culture. Additionally, U.S. students were also able to discuss, share and collaborate on research with faculty and students in their host institutions, and many successfully maintained those academic partnerships after returning to the U.S. In fact, four out of the seven U.S. students in the focus group are still in contact with their Latin American or Caribbean peers through social media or otherwise, and two students report having discussed plans to meet again in the near future.

“I was able to present on my topic of study, and I also got to network with some student groups that came to me for answers. I focus on remote sensing—so basically drones, satellites and such—so they wanted to talk to me about the different tools that I could provide them with. So that was great, to be able to network with professors and people in Hermosillo, but also to learn a lot myself.” —COMPUTER

ENGINEERING STUDENT

Although some students valued the opportunity to practice their Spanish language skills, according to six of the seven focus group participants, **the language barrier was the main challenge they faced while abroad.** Similar to the experience of Latin American and Caribbean students, most of the U.S. students in the focus group had some command of Spanish prior to traveling to their host countries, and the majority had taken at least one college level class in Spanish, but they still did not feel comfortable speaking in either casual settings or technical or academic settings in their host universities. Even students who had strong Spanish language skills were challenged by more technical terms related to their subject areas. In retrospect, several students agreed that attending a minimum amount of intermediate-level Spanish classes would improve prospective participants’ experiences while abroad.

“When you speak in technical terms it’s very different than your everyday Spanish. So even knowing Spanish, when they were talking about polymers and drilling fluid, I was like, man, I have no idea what’s going on” —ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING STUDENT

For U.S. students, as was the case for their LAC peers, the impact of their short visits seems to be long lasting. Based on the data collected through this study, there is some evidence of (a) students’ continued academic collaboration with their host universities, as well as

(b) increased future mobility to Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁵ Indeed, both U.S. and LAC alumni have successfully formed lasting relationships with their peers and faculty at their host university. For instance, two of the U.S. students in the focus group are currently working on publishing their collaborative research, one of them in an international science journal, alongside their host university counterparts.

Finally, U.S. students and institutional representatives indicated that 100K alumni show an increased interest in study abroad opportunities and international travel generally, although there is less evidence of future intra-regional mobility compared to their LAC counterparts. One of the U.S. students, whose family immigrated from Latin America, expressed his desire to work in Ecuador for at least two to three years after graduation after learning about the professional opportunities in the petroleum industry during his visit. Other students mentioned that their trip sparked their interest in studying abroad again, but not necessarily in Latin America. Most importantly, although a more significant portion of U.S. students did not plan on working or studying in Latin America in the future, **100K-funded programs undoubtedly shaped the course of their academic and professional trajectories by turning their focus to Latin American and Caribbean issues, or more generally, by instilling in them a more inclusive and global perspective.**

“The trip really opened up my eyes to the possibility of spending an extended period of time in another country, even spending a whole summer in Spain [...] or the Spring semester. It really opened my eyes to this being possible.”

—MECHANICAL ENGINEERING STUDENT

A Comparative Experience

100K-funded programs provided a positive and catalytic experience for all students, with clear differences between the LAC and the U.S. experience

Although the two student groups went through different processes to participate in 100K-funded programs, there was significant overlap in the participation criteria, the core skills they were able to develop, the challenges they faced and the long-term impact of their experiences. Nonetheless, there was more evidence of increased future mobility and development among Latin American and

Caribbean students, as a result of the connections they made during their trips, as well as due to their increased awareness of other grants and study abroad opportunities. These students also faced other challenges beyond the language barrier, which included visa and traveling restrictions and prohibitive costs.

All students interviewed found the program’s connection to their area of study to be the most compelling reason to participate in 100K-funded programs, and emphasized the value of deepening their professional and practical knowledge through their study abroad experience. All students similarly developed better inter-cultural communication and linguistic skills, but identified the language barrier to be the biggest challenge they faced while abroad. As 100K alumni, all students were also extremely successful in maintaining relationships with their host university counterparts, some of which,

flourished into research and academic collaborations (see Table 6).

Overall, U.S. students’ experience was largely focused on gaining practical experience in a different context and learning about the region while practicing Spanish. On the other hand, Latin American students were concerned with absorbing academic innovation from U.S. institutions, creating connections they could leverage for further study or professional development and improving their English language skills. **Despite the difference in approach, 100K grants enabled all students to advance, launch, or even transform their academic and professional trajectories, while planting a seed for lasting, collaborative networks across the hemisphere.**

TABLE 6: COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCE, U.S. AND LAC STUDENTS

Source: Compiled by IAD.

	LAC STUDENTS	U.S. STUDENTS
Selection and recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitive selection processes • Multiple selection filters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handpicked by professor • Course activity or requirement
Criteria for participation	Program is related to their area of study or specific research project	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring post-graduation options • Gaining professional experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference over other regions in order to practice Spanish
Subject-specific skills development	Exposed to technological innovation and new paradigms	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore professional trajectories • Network, form professional connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply their technical skills practically, in new contexts
Transversal skills development	Inter-cultural communication; English and Spanish language skills	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial aid literacy • Increased confidence in academic abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in developing regional expertise • Empathy and cultural sensitivity
Challenges	The language barrier: all students felt unprepared to communicate, especially using subject-specific, technical terms	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa processing issues and fears • Lack of confidence in their academic abilities 	
Long-term impact on development and mobility	Lasting connections with host university students and staff, opportunities for academic collaborations	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly increased interest in future mobility • Professional advancement through connections and enhanced global skills (English, inter-cultural communication) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased interest in LAC culture and issues

III. HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION DEVELOPMENT AND GROWTH

As with the student experiences, every partnership between higher education institutions is unique. Nevertheless, **all institutions—regardless of their size or capacity—benefited from their participation in the 100K Fund.** There were two major impact areas for HEIs: internal capacity growth and external partnership development. Participating HEIs generally defined the grant’s impact on their institutional development in terms of programmatic expansion or scalability, level of inter-departmental collaboration, leadership buy-in and internal financial support. The grant also had a measurable impact on the quality and sustainability of their partnerships with other HEIs, 100K Fund contributors and even U.S. government institutions.

Institutions’ reasons for participating in the 100K Fund were relatively similar regardless of their operational capacity or country of origin. 100K’s thematic alignment with their institutional mission was important to all, while larger HEIs also sought 100K grants in order to diversify their study abroad offerings and increase their faculty’s engagement in research collaborations abroad. Additionally, HEIs hoped the 100K Fund would address some of the challenges they had encountered when previously implementing study abroad programs. Although the grant resolved many internal and external barriers, program sustainability, visa restrictions and associated costs remained challenging for LAC HEIs, while U.S. HEIs continued to struggle with low levels of student interest in LAC destinations and leadership support.

In the three areas of impact, 100K grants resulted in comparable outcomes for Latin American and Caribbean and U.S. institutions of similar size and operational capacity. For larger institutions with a dedicated study abroad or international partnerships office, the grant allowed them to scale-up internal funding to support additional intra-regional mobility programs beyond 100K, while forming new collaborations with regional partners. **The grant also had a transformative effect on smaller HEIs without an established study abroad operation, enabling institutions to build valuable technical**

knowledge and experience, gain leadership support and, ultimately, develop pathways towards establishing a dedicated international education office. In all cases, the grant strengthened inter-departmental collaboration and communication. In terms of external partnership development, larger U.S. HEIs were more successful than smaller ones—as well as most LAC HEIs—in securing the funding to support lasting collaborations and further programming with their partner institutions.

The findings outlined below are based on data from HEI representative focus groups and grantee survey data, disaggregated both by U.S. and LAC experiences and institutional size and capacity. To triangulate the survey results and effectively evaluate the Fund’s impact, HEI representatives were probed to assess the effect that 100K grants had on their opportunities for programmatic expansion; their relationships with other faculty, offices and departments; the level of support of their leadership; and their own professional development. Similarly, HEI representatives reflected on the sustainability and outcomes of their partnerships with their U.S. and LAC counterparts and their relationships with Fund contributors. Focus group participants also described their criteria for participation and the challenges that remained in the implementation of 100K-funded programs. All findings were complemented with HEI survey data, drawing from a larger pool of respondents—57 U.S. HEIs and 59 LAC HEIs.

Criteria for Participation and Implementation Challenges

A commitment to increasing student mobility requires leadership buy-in and financial resources to achieve success

Institutions reported two common motivations to apply for 100K grants: (a) clear thematic alignment with specific competition themes or 100K’s mission overall,

and **(b) expanding institutional and faculty reach in Latin America and the Caribbean, the U.S., or internationally.** In rare instances, U.S. and LAC HEIs were motivated to seek out 100K funding for an existing partnership, rather than to advance their efforts in a specific subject area or region of interest. More generally, 100K's focus on workforce development and entrepreneurship training aligned with U.S. institutions' objectives—especially for community colleges—though some community colleges were less interested in specific competition themes, given that they often offer less subject-specific programs than four-year institutions. In other U.S. HEIs, such as research or four-year institutions, individual departments sought funding for research collaboration or a specific project that was aligned with a competition theme.

"I think for us the criteria were really looking at the theme of the grant itself to make sure it fits with the mission and purpose of our institution [...]. As a two-year institution, our mission and purpose is to educate and train people to get a job, so that sort of mission and purpose of the grant's themes fit right up our alley, and the opportunity to develop partnerships in other parts of the world." —COMMUNITY COLLEGE

REPRESENTATIVE

Similarly, the majority of LAC HEIs represented in the focus group identify internationalization, bilingual education (in English and Spanish), sustainability and entrepreneurship as pillars of their institutional mission. Participating LAC institutions generally sought to provide their students with an opportunity to travel abroad, innovate within their area of study and develop their English language skills for the professional world. Additionally, LAC HEIs were equally interested in the academic exchange that can result from students' visits to U.S. institutions—both for the advancement of their students' own academic and professional trajectories, as well as their departments' innovation and research.

"We are constantly searching for funds—that is our biggest motivation. Because although it's not a requirement that all of our students participate in an international program, it is a central component of the international bilingual model that we have established as an institution." —LATIN AMERICAN HEI

REPRESENTATIVE

There is strong alignment between the academic and professional strengths that LAC institutions believe they are able to offer U.S. students and staff, and the thematic objectives and mission of U.S. HEIs, and vice-versa.

Surveyed LAC HEIs most commonly identify experiential or 'hands-on' education—such as access to applied, laboratory-based programs and internship opportunities—as a key institutional strength they offer to incoming U.S. students. Other common selling points mentioned by LAC HEIs included Spanish language programs and exposure to local culture and communities. These strengths align with U.S. HEIs' interest in entrepreneurship training and applied research opportunities. Similarly, surveyed U.S. institutions identified their strengths to be access to cutting-edge research, classes and resources, as well as their international presence or recognition, and bilingual Spanish-English language professors. These strengths directly complement the objectives that LAC institutions identified as important when building student skills, namely internationalization, bilingualism, and technological advancement.

Other institutions, especially those in the U.S., were not as focused on specific grant competition themes or 100K's mission, but rather sought to diversify their international study portfolio as well as faculty research collaborations, to include more U.S. and LAC experts. This objective was also important to larger LAC HEIs for whom 'internationalizing' their faculty engagement and gaining new expertise also drove innovation within their institutions' departments.

100K-funded programs have successfully addressed common institutional and external barriers faced by HEIs in past study abroad experiences, yet program sustainability, associated costs, and visa restrictions remain challenges. Prior to their participation in the 100K Fund, HEIs faced a number of barriers to implementing new and successful study abroad programs in LAC or the U.S., both internally—including lack of funding, infrastructure capacity, leadership buy-in, or student interest—and externally, with governmental restrictions on visa processing or unsustainable partnerships. Surveyed HEIs reported on these challenges, as well as on the impact of 100K grants on them.

At the institutional level, 68% of surveyed LAC HEIs and 66% of surveyed U.S. HEIs reported that in the past, the most challenging aspect of implementing new study abroad programs had been finding sustainable exchange models. Other common barriers for all HEIs include the prioritization of other regions for study abroad; challenges with course equivalency and credit transfers, accreditation, or quality control issues; and the lack of leadership support. Additionally, 71% of LAC HEIs reported that, in the past, they struggled to gather and provide the

necessary funds for students to travel abroad, while 53% of U.S. HEIs do not consider it to be a significant barrier. As further illustrated later in this section, **100K grants have successfully addressed some of these internal barriers, by increasing student, staff and leadership interest in the region—both in the U.S. and LAC countries; promoting leadership buy-in; offering partial funding; and minimizing the need for course equivalency agreements due to the short duration of 100K-funded exchanges.** Nonetheless, program sustainability, leadership buy-in, and associated costs, among others, remain as challenges (see Table 7).

At U.S. institutions, focus group participants highlighted two institutional challenges they continued to experience to varying degrees when implementing the 100K grant, namely (a) lack of high-level administration or leadership support in the early planning stages and, as outlined in the previous section, (b) difficulty recruiting students. The lack of support from leadership is still a challenge for smaller institutions, especially community colleges or those without an established study abroad infrastructure. In larger U.S. institutions, 100K-funded programs often originated from department-led initiatives or research projects, and generally demanded less approval from upper-administration than initiatives managed in institution-wide international education offices.

“My institution doesn’t have a study abroad program or office. Even though we’re a large community college, they’ve been reluctant to invest in study abroad. So a main challenge we had in scaling this up was just our upper-level administration: at first getting them to write support letters for grants, even for the second year. So just getting my institution behind all of that, was a big challenge.” —COMMUNITY COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

Alternatively, LAC HEI representatives discussed budgetary challenges that limited their ability to access scarce resources and to build sustainable partnerships that continue even after 100K funding ended. As was the case for their U.S. HEI counterparts, LAC institutions also highlighted administrative and logistical hurdles on both sides of the partnership. Overall, **LAC institutions found that (a) demonstrating program or partnership sustainability to qualify for the grant, as well as (b) matching the grants’ funds or covering associated costs were the main institutional challenges they faced** in their grant-writing and implementation efforts. Although the 100K Fund did address some of the budgetary constraints often faced by LAC HEIs, securing the funds to extend student programming beyond the grant remained a challenge for all.

The 100K proposal guidelines suggest a number of options for HEIs to demonstrate sustainability, which are not only

TABLE 7: MOST COMMON INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES, BY REGION

Source: Compiled by IAD based on survey data and focus groups data.

	LAC HEIS	U.S. HEIS
Challenges prior to 100K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program sustainability • Associated costs • Accreditation or quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program sustainability • Prioritizing other regions • Lack of leadership support • Accreditation or quality
Challenges addressed by 100K grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation or quality • Associated costs, <i>partially</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program sustainability (<i>for larger HEIs</i>) • Leadership support • Prioritizing LAC destinations (<i>among faculty</i>) • Accreditation issues
Remaining challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated costs • Program sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program sustainability (<i>for smaller HEIs</i>) • Leadership support (<i>in early stages</i>) • Lack of student interest in LAC

Note: Survey data was triangulated with focus group data to shortlist the most cited institutional issues reported by HEIs and resolved through the 100K grant

limited to the availability of funds for future programming but include their intention to maintain a strong alliance with their partner HEI or the potential to unlock other available opportunities or resources. Nonetheless, despite the application's flexibility, the requirement to demonstrate, somehow, sustainability in the grant proposal seems daunting for LAC institutions, especially for those who might not have an established exchange program or partnership in the U.S. and are unable to sign MOUs or secure internal funding to continue the program beyond the grant period. Ultimately, although most of the institutions reported maintaining research collaborations that outlasted the grant, they were often unable to fund additional cohorts of exchange students. This is unsurprising given the cost difference between virtual faculty research collaboration and travel for dozens of students, but it reinforces the razor-thin financial margins that many LAC HEIs operate on, as well as the need to seek out innovative, low-cost solutions. Even with 100K funding, many LAC institutions struggled to allocate sufficient funds to match the 100K grant. As national, public universities, several LAC HEIs had to be creative about fundraising so as to not require students to contribute to the costs directly.

"As for biggest challenges, in the very proposal for the grant, they require that projects are sustainable in the long-term. That is indeed a problem, and much more complicated than with other grants, because the resources here in Latin America are scarce, so to support continued and regular, cost-shared student exchanges with U.S. universities has been very complicated." —LATIN AMERICAN HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Beyond institutional or internal barriers, **prior to 100K, common external barriers faced by HEIs in the implementation of new study abroad programs included (a) visa processing and travel restrictions, especially among LAC HEIs, (b) safety concerns due to local political conditions and (c) difficulty finding a partner institution and ensuring follow-through** (see Table 8). Government restrictions or visa processing issues are a common challenge, as reported by 31% of U.S. HEIs and 76% of LAC HEIs when implementing study abroad programs, which confirms a significant discrepancy in the processes required of Latin American and Caribbean students in comparison to those from U.S. institutions. A number of LAC institutions also report being unprepared to cover the costs associated with visa processing, which the majority had not included in their initial budget and at times included traveling costs to the country's capital. Although some institutions report receiving support from the U.S. embassies as a result of the 100K Fund's connection to

the U.S. government, for most, visa processing issues (and associated costs) remain a challenge when implementing 100K grants (see Section II).

U.S. HEIs identified the unstable political climate in some LAC countries as a barrier, which often limited their leadership's support for past programs in the region. **As a result of their participation in 100K, U.S. HEIs have been able to successfully address their leadership's safety concerns, primarily through the program's ties with the DOS.** In only one case, the international study office at a large state university still experienced some resistance from leadership to participate in a 100K competition, due to their concerns around students' safety in the region.

In terms of partnerships with other HEIs, fading agreements and lack of partner follow-through were also ranked as common external issues that limited all HEIs' ability to implement exchange programs effectively in the past. For instance, LAC HEIs report having had difficulty connecting with potential partners in other regions of the world, while U.S. HEIs reported experiencing logistical and follow-through issues with their partner HEIs. **More so than any other past initiative, the nature of the grant-writing process for the 100K Fund has facilitated new connections between HEIs across the hemisphere, as well as reliable, committed partnerships.** Some institutions in the focus groups still reported encountering some administrative and logistical hurdles when organizing their students' stay in host universities through 100K grants, as well as when coordinating with host departments about credit conversion or class equivalency. Nonetheless, these unforeseen challenges are often an inevitable product of working across cultures and countries, which can ultimately result in increased institutional knowledge and capacity for future collaborations.

"We have host families in Mexico, so we had to figure out how we'd pay the host families, and that became a two-month ordeal, of how do we get this money to the host families because our institution doesn't allow certain transfers of money and the institution in Mexico doesn't deal directly with those families, they need to be paid directly in cash. Those kinds of things just get to be very burdensome, dragging down the administrative process." —FOUR-YEAR, U.S. HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Ultimately, while the 100K Fund has successfully addressed some of the internal barriers that HEIs faced when implementing new programs in the past, some remain—including a lack of student interest and leadership buy-in at smaller U.S. HEIs, as well as difficulty proving partnership

TABLE 8. MOST COMMON EXTERNAL CHALLENGES, BY REGION

Source: Compiled by IAD based on survey data and focus groups data.

	LAC HEIS	U.S. HEIS
Challenges prior to 100K	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa processing issues • Difficulty finding partners • Costs of required language exams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety concerns • Lack of partner follow-through • Institutional restrictions at partner HEIs
Challenges addressed by 100K grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty finding partners • Associated costs, <i>partially</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety concerns • Partnership follow-through • Institutional restrictions
Remaining challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associated costs • Visa processing issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner follow-through • Logistical issues

Note: Survey data was triangulated with focus group data to shortlist the most cited external barriers reported by HEIs and resolved through the 100K grant

sustainability and cost-sharing among LAC HEIs. A few of the external barriers also persist, some of which fall beyond the operational scope of the program. These include visa processing restrictions for LAC students and unforeseen implementation challenges resulting from HEI-HEI cross-cultural communication issues.

unavailable opportunities for students, and to begin building a study abroad portfolio. This was particularly true for those institutions that were awarded grants in more than one funding cycle or collaborated with other HEIs in a consortium model. In all cases, this experience proved to be extremely enriching for the professional careers of program leaders in this study’s focus groups.

Internal and Institutional Development

Positive impacts on programmatic growth and internal collaborations allow for strengthened study abroad programs

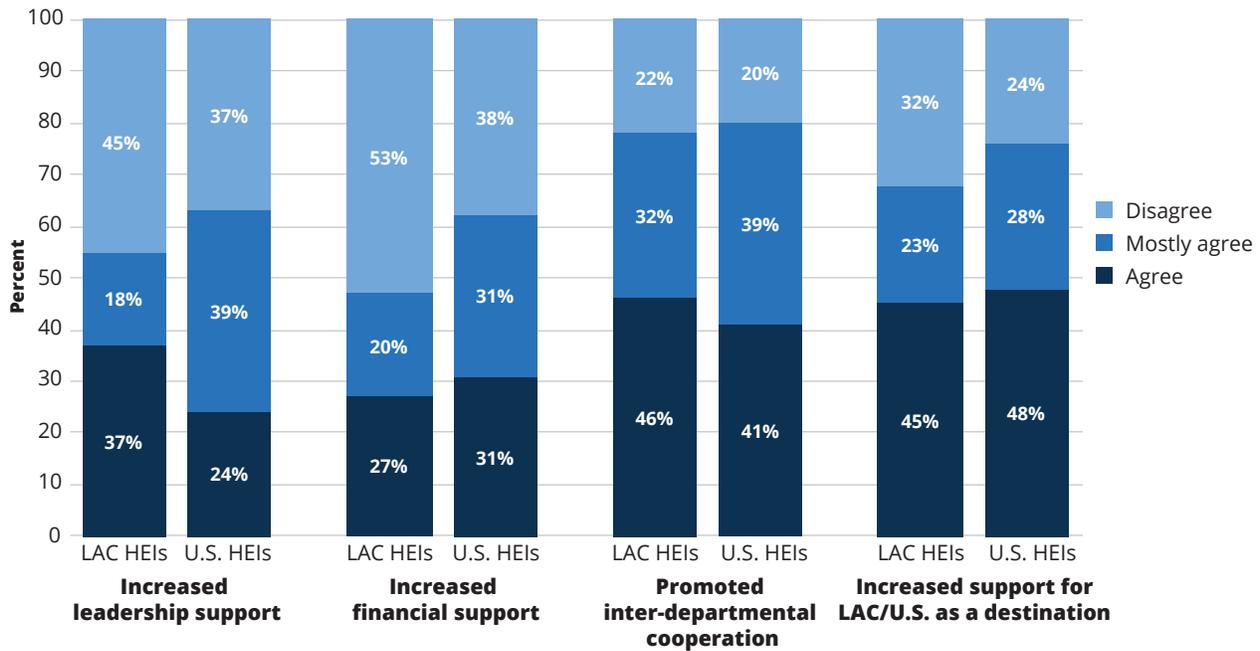
100K grants had a significant, positive impact on institutions’ internal development, regardless of country or size. According to survey responses, 76% of LAC HEIs and 88% of U.S. HEIs reported that their participation in the 100K Fund greatly strengthened the internal partnerships between academic departments, study abroad offices, faculty and leadership. The variation in institutional benefits was greatest between larger, well-established HEIs with a dedicated international education office and smaller, more recently established HEIs without an international education operation. For larger HEIs, the grant enabled them to scale-up existing 100K-funded programs at the institutional level, strengthen inter-departmental collaboration and expand study abroad opportunities in Latin America and the Caribbean. **For smaller HEIs, the grant was transformational—allowing them to offer previously**

Surveyed HEIs reported consistent levels of impact across U.S. and LAC institutions. In several dimensions, U.S. HEIs reported slightly more significant impacts than LAC HEIs, including on the promotion of leadership buy-in, on increasing institutional interest in the region, and especially, on securing institutional financial support. Nearly 62% of U.S. HEIs agreed that the 100K grant helped them gain financial support within their institution, while only 46% of LAC HEIs reported an increase in institutionally allocated funds as a result of the grant. However, in all cases, **100K grants had a very positive impact on institutional collaboration, with almost 80% of surveyed HEIs reporting that it resulted in a significant increase in inter-departmental cooperation.** (See Graph 3.)

The grants’ impact on institutional development varied much more significantly across HEIs of different operational capacity than across countries. As a result of their participation, **HEIs with an established international education operation were able to scale-up 100K-funded programs** to other departments or as an institution-wide initiative, as well as strengthen inter-departmental collaboration. For larger U.S HEIs, specifically, 100K grants and their ties to the DOS also provided an additional degree of credibility that enabled institutions to initiate conversations about the scope of their international

GRAPH 3: AREAS OF INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACTED BY 100K GRANTS, BY REGION

Source: Compiled by IAD based on survey data.



Note: Graph values reflect the aggregated 1st and 2nd score (agree) and 3rd and 4th score (disagree).

education operations and justify an expansion, and to continue to expand their previously inexistent collaborations with LAC institutions, faculty and students.

In larger HEIs, department-based 100K grants, once successfully completed, had a ripple effect in encouraging faculty from other departments to pursue grants that offer students international mobility opportunities. In larger LAC HEIs in which 100K-funded programs were initially part of a department-led project and later became an institution-wide initiative, the dedicated international education office often began managing the everyday operations of the program. This liberated academic staff from the bureaucratic burden attached to program implementation and encouraged other departments to take up this opportunity. In one Latin American institution, since their initial 100K-funded program, two additional departments have been inspired to apply for, and were awarded, a grant.

“I think just raising awareness of these kinds of programs across all areas from Student Registrar to the Accounting Department makes people think about more opportunities, and it certainly raises awareness among the faculty to hopefully incentivize them to go after grants that allow students some international mobility opportunities as well.” —FOUR-YEAR, U.S. HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Secondly, 100K grants led to increased inter-departmental collaboration for most HEIs. For larger HEIs in LAC, 100K grants helped further strengthen internal coordination among departments within the institution, usually between the international education or relations offices and the academic departments, as well as with faculty or even local communities. This was also true for all U.S. institutions in the focus group, regardless of size, whose representatives commented on the improved relationships between the different offices and departments that had to collaborate on implementing the 100K-funded exchange. Some attributed this to the 100K’s comprehensive application, including the grant-writing process, which usually resulted from a collaborative effort between staff and faculty who had not previously participated in exchange program operations.

“We manage all administrative processes. We are a university-wide office, and the [100K grant] pushed us to collaborate with a variety of departments and offices within the university, from accounting to research departments; laboratories that we had to visit; and even local communities, because many of the projects have a lot to do with visiting those communities.”

—LATIN AMERICAN HEI REPRESENTATIVE

Finally, for some U.S. HEIs with an established study abroad infrastructure, **100K grants have also triggered transformative conversations about the impact of international education programming on students.** A few HEI representatives commented on the positive impact that the 100K's ties with the U.S. government have had on their study abroad operations. In these cases, their 100K-funded program's recognition has granted a new degree of credibility to their established study abroad office and, as a result, has helped expand their impact and reach on campus. These U.S. institutions also reported that academic recruitment and collaboration with Latin American and Caribbean countries had been limited previously due to leadership's concerns about safety. Participating in the 100K Fund allowed these institutions to address security concerns, gain leadership support and, in some cases, expand their allocated budgets.

"At the Global Office, it helped us spread our wings a little bit further and touch more people than we normally would [...]. Being able to say that our institution [sic] is partnering up with an enormous institution in Argentina, that's something to talk about, which then leads us into other conversations about what else we're doing on campus when it comes to international education. So that opened some doors for us on campus because of that notoriety, and the White House or State Department's sticker on. That was one of the biggest benefits, the fact that it reminded the university why the Global Office is there, and why it has been there for over 30 years, and that even if often times we're thinking local with our students, we can remind them how to operate in a global community." –

COMMUNITY COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

For HEIs without a dedicated program infrastructure for international education, the impact of the grant on their institutional development was perhaps even more transformational. Indeed, for many winning LAC and U.S. HEIs, 100K grants were one of the first international education funding streams available to them, and as such, an opportunity to institutionalize new processes and develop strategies to seek additional funding and expand international programming. Similarly, defining the processes to implement 100K-funded programs, and to receive incoming exchange students successfully was a stepping stone for recently established, smaller LAC HEIs to create the demand for a dedicated, international education office. Two U.S. and three LAC institutions represented in the focus groups noted that since their participation in the 100K Fund, their leadership has been more open to discussing opportunities for future programming, and in two cases, the institutions ultimately allocated funding to expand their international education office.

"All of the general logistics of the program are coordinated by us, from putting together agendas to building a whole program; with itineraries, local transportation plans, housing and visits to research centers and other institutions. It was very useful for us to have all of these processes documented, to have templates, forms, and to build some structure. Although we still don't have an Office of International Programs, we already have a structure and now, it's easier for us to delegate because there is already a defined process to follow when implementing new projects." – **CARIBBEAN HEI REPRESENTATIVE**

Gaining leadership-buy-in and sustained financial support was more likely among institutions that (a) were awarded two or more grants consecutively and/or (b) collaborated together, as a consortium, to leverage their collective resources and expertise. Indeed, the impact of the grants on smaller HEIs' institutional development and growth was significantly greater after two or three funding cycles. For example, after receiving two 100K grants, two different U.S. institutions without an established international education office signed an MOU with their respective LAC HEI, and both institutions secured the internal funds and leadership approval needed to support the costs of a new set of student cohorts. **In this sense, longer grant cycles or funding renewals support HEIs in building effective and sustainable internal capacity for international education programming.**

"I would say for us this has been the difference between doing and not doing study abroad at all in our college. This year we didn't have a 100K grant because they didn't have grants for Argentina for us to apply to, but we were still going to lead the trip to Argentina and continue the work with our partners. It was huge for us, because we did it the first year and then we got the grant again the second year, so then it became this thing at my college, those administrators were at least shamed into continuing the program on year three. So now it's become this conversation, again." – **COMMUNITY COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE**

To address some of the institutional and capacity challenges that can limit smaller institutions from participating, three community colleges in the U.S. partnered to create an informal "consortium model". This effort proved successful at enabling smaller HEIs to compete for 100K grants, even without an established study abroad infrastructure or substantial administrative support.¹⁶ The consortium model enabled partnering institutions to gradually increase leadership buy-in while sharing the administrative responsibilities so as not to over-burden internal resources. In a sense, the consortium model allows HEIs that have limited experience with

international education to get a taste of it, evaluate the impact it can have on students and create a precedent to pull internal investment into future programming.

“For me, having to collaborate with others or asking the questions to make sure I’m putting the budget together appropriately in a technical sense, or allowing the money to come in without any issues, was helpful and transformational, professionally speaking.” —COMMUNITY COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

Ultimately, creating this partnership was an invaluable professional development opportunity for program leaders and coordinators across all types of institutions.

Focus group participants mentioned gaining important skills in grant-writing, budget development and program collaboration with other departments and institutions in the U.S. or Latin America. Program leaders in institutions without established study abroad operations also tended to express a sense of ownership and pride over the successful implementation of the exchange—and the life-changing impact it had on their students—which in turn strengthened their confidence to take on similar projects in the future.

External Partnerships

Partnership sustainability remains an issue for some U.S. HEIs and most LAC HEIs, while relationships with donors remain an untapped opportunity for all

Partnership sustainability is a prime objective of the 100K Fund’s mission, which is why it is included as a selection criterion for grant competitions. Indeed, **compared to student-level scholarship models of a similar magnitude, 100K’s focus on partnership development has potentially led to more sustainable academic collaborations.** For instance, most winning institutions have successfully implemented MOUs as a result of the grant and maintain faculty connections and/or research collaborations. Establishing a relationship of this kind often serves as an effective platform to attract future funding streams, internally or externally. A significant portion of HEIs, however, have struggled to financially support further student-level programming immediately after the grant. This is especially true for LAC HEIs and smaller or non-consortium U.S. HEIs. Nonetheless, in all cases, the 100K model for partnership exchange has inspired and motivated these institutions to pursue new partnerships or

identify alternative funding streams to strengthen existing ones (see Graph 4).

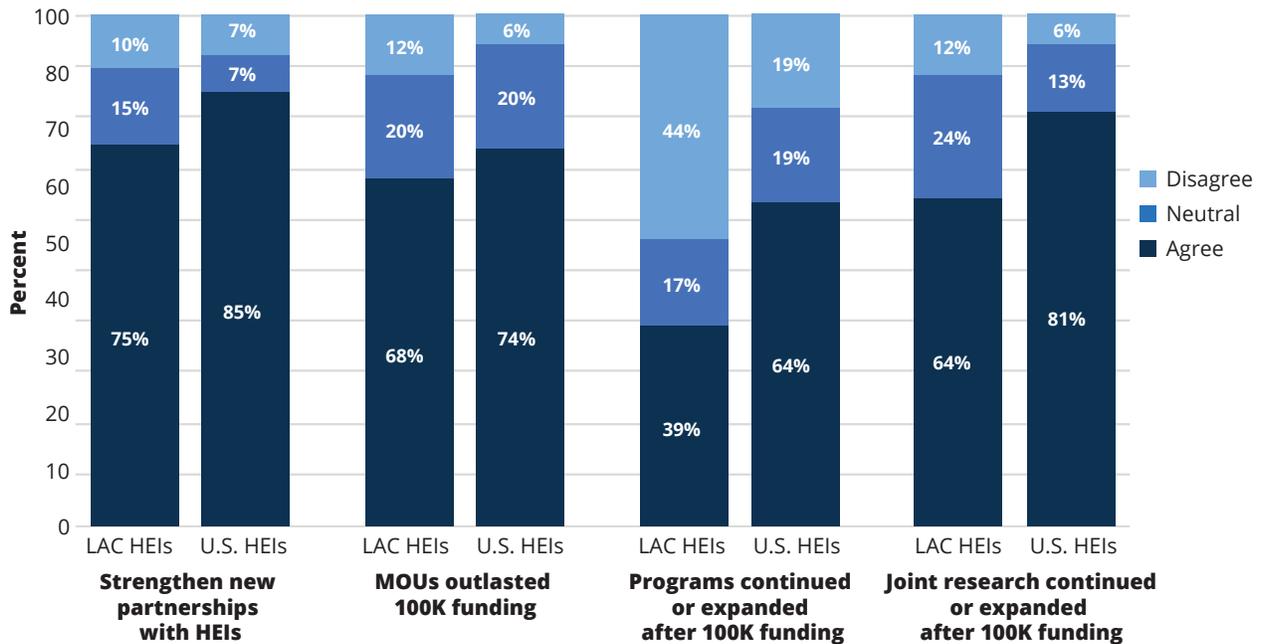
According to surveyed institutions, LAC HEIs were generally less able than U.S. HEIs to support active partnerships that outlast 100K’s initial funding cycle, as well as to continue offering programs that were initially funded by 100K grants. **Out of all HEIs surveyed, 39% of LAC HEIs and 63% of U.S. HEIs reported that their 100K-funded programs outlasted the initial grant cycle.** Generally, LAC HEIs have a harder time sustaining partnerships and especially continuing their programs after funding cycles end. They have been more successful at building and strengthening new partnerships, which indicates that institutional capacity is being developed, even when there may not be funding to sustain a specific program. U.S. HEIs also reported success in continuing or expanding joint research, which may be a function of the structure and incentives in U.S. higher education, where faculty tenure and promotion decisions can be closely tied to funding and research output. Given that maintaining a partnership—and often times a program—is a cooperative effort between U.S. and LAC institutions, these results might indicate that LAC HEIs are less likely to have access to the funds necessary to sustain these efforts and might instead rely on U.S. institutional resources. Overall, LAC HEIs seem to face additional barriers to sustainability that are not addressed by a single cycle of 100K funding.

Indeed, although signing MOUs is common practice, maintaining active, financially viable partnerships with other institutions is an option only available to a few. Maintaining an active partnership with other HEIs is more common among larger U.S. institutions with an established international education office, or for members of consortiums that collaborated in their partnership. For other U.S. HEIs, on average, only 13% managed to form partnerships that outlasted a single funding cycle. In the case of LAC HEIs, only a few larger institutions with established operations for international education were able to financially support their partnerships with their U.S. counterparts past one grant. From the eight institutions represented in the focus group, only two Latin American and Caribbean institutions reported maintaining or expecting to maintain an active partnership with their U.S. counterparts for more than one year after their funding cycle ends.

Additionally, **sustainable, active partnerships were more common among institutions who received more than one cycle of funding**, both in the case of U.S. and LAC institutions. In the U.S. HEIs focus group, two universities

GRAPH 4: IMPACT OF 100K GRANT ON PARTNERSHIP SUSTAINABILITY, BY REGION

Source: Compiled by IAD based on survey data.



Note: Graph values reflect the aggregated 1st and 2nd score (agree) and 3rd and 4th score (disagree).

were able to sign long-term MOUs with their partner institutions—only one of which included additional programming beyond the initial exchange. For these institutions, their partnerships began with two cycles of 100K funding, which offered a strong base from which to search for alternate funding streams or identify available institutional funding in order to continue offering this opportunity to students. One of the two LAC institutions that reported successfully maintaining their partnerships and programs beyond 100K’s funding was awarded a 100K grant three times for three different partnerships (see Box 2).

Nevertheless, even in institutions where partnerships did not outlast the grant, the **100K model for exchange has served as a template for both U.S. and LAC HEIs to pursue similar partnerships in the future.**

“While we don’t necessarily have ideas moving forward with individual institutions, I think for us, the model that we have created with this kind of exchange idea, hosting and traveling, entrepreneurship, workforce development, all of these themes and topics, can be replicated with other partnerships moving forward, and using these experiences to build more partners and programs, some needing money and others not necessarily.” —COMMUNITY COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE

Finally, building strong donor relationships remains an untapped opportunity, especially for 100K’s U.S. grantees. Although the purpose of the 100K Fund is not to form donor-HEI relationships, strengthening these connections may result in further training and professional development opportunities for students. Despite being generally familiar with sponsoring companies and institutions, U.S. HEIs did not form any direct connections with funders, but rather focused on their relationship with POA and promoting the program’s ties to the U.S. Department of State to gain institutional legitimacy. For their part, LAC institutions, like their students, had a much deeper understanding of and connection with the companies that sponsored their competitions. Two institutions represented in the focus group had prior working relationships with their sponsoring company, including research collaborations and shared use of machinery, yet they were unaware of the company’s contribution to the 100K Fund until after they had received the grant.

BOX 2: MULTIPLE FUNDING CYCLES BUILD PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

A Latin American HEI has been able to maintain not only their partnership with three U.S. HEIs but extend their student and faculty exchange programs beyond 100K funding. This was only possible after three 100K grants, which initiated three different partnerships that have subsequently attracted a variety of funding streams.

After the first 100K grant, their U.S. partner institution was awarded a Fulbright grant to continue to work with them and to support the exchange of their faculty and students. In addition, this LAC HEI has also renewed their MOU with two other U.S. partner institutions, and they collaboratively funded an additional cycle of faculty exchanges. Finding institutional funds has been challenging for the LAC HEI, and while they have had to rely on their U.S. counterparts' resources, this "multiple partnerships" model has helped start conversations about allocating an internal budget to support these programs.

"After the first 100K grant, obviously our relationships with our partner faculty became stronger [...]. With [the first university], there are two activities that have continued. First, this year, two of their faculty members were going to come to lead a workshop here, with funds we were awarded through another competition, thanks to the connections that resulted from 100K. Secondly, their university applied for a Fulbright-Hays grant to work with us, because they already know us, we had already worked together and done things well."

"For the program with [the second university] that we carried out last year, sending 9 students and a professor abroad, this year we completed the exchange and welcomed two U.S. faculty members that led the academic portion and taught our students. By sharing costs between the two universities, these two faculty members were able to visit again and teach the same workshop to another 10 students from the university. With [the third university], we had a pretty good relationship that already existed, but continues."

This institution explicitly attributes their success in maintaining their partnerships to having received the grant multiple times, and as a result, practiced and perfected their implementation processes.

"Thanks to the relationships we built, we have had additional opportunities to fund programs. We achieved sustainability in our partnerships only because there was a second cycle and the spectrum of beneficiaries was much greater"

"In our case, we already had a previous relationship with the donor. We collaborate on research projects and there is a deep relationship between our university and them, especially because we share machinery and research spaces. This relationship did not have any connection to our participation in the program, because we really didn't know that they were donors for this grant, we participated completely separately, and when we found out they were involved, it was a pleasant surprise for us." **CARIBBEAN HEI REPRESENTATIVE**

"After that, we were able to get in contact with them. In fact, one of the visits that we were going to do with the entire group of students was going to be at one of their factory plants. In the end, it did not happen, but they connected us with another business to do a tour. We made that connection, so this year when we thought about applying, we were hoping to collaborate with them again." **LATIN AMERICAN HEI REPRESENTATIVE**

After realizing their partnership with the Fund, one of these institutions was able to strengthen their relationship with their sponsoring company, attempted to plan a site visit, and hope the company can sponsor their next 100K grant competition.

As such, the relationship between donors and HEIs remains an untapped opportunity to enhance the 100K experience and ensure that the effectiveness of the private-public partnership model is present at all levels of implementation (see Section V).

A Comparative Experience

The grant catalyzed internal programmatic development in HEIs with limited operational capacity and supported sustainable intra-regional partnerships between institutions with established international education programs

Ultimately, institutions that were awarded 100K grants had rather similar objectives in trying to expand international education opportunities for their students and research collaboration among faculty, regardless of their geographic location. The 100K Fund helped address common challenges to implementing study abroad programs, but a few barriers remained. Even with the 100K funds,

institutions in LAC encountered budgetary issues, which often limited their capacity to sustain partnerships, as well as U.S. government restrictions on travel and visa processing. On the other hand, U.S. institutions mostly struggled with low levels of student interest and lack of leadership support (see Table 9). While some of these barriers are beyond the scope of 100K, institutions identified strategies that may help them overcome some challenges, such as building consortiums with other local HEIs or extending the grants to last for two to three travel cycles (see Section V).

In the cases in which 100K grants have failed to produce significant program expansion, an increase in matching internal funding, or partnership sustainability, institutions have used the experience to systematize operational

TABLE 9: COMPARATIVE EXPERIENCE, U.S. AND LAC HEIS

Source: Compiled by IAD.

		U.S. HEIS	LAC HEIS
Criteria for participation	Thematic, mission alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce development • Entrepreneurship training • Applied research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internationalization • Bilingual education • Innovation and technological import
	Research internationalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify research collaboration and areas of interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update faculty expertise, driving innovation
Challenges	Institutional challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of student interest • Lack of leadership-buy in or institutional interest in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring partnership sustainability • Financial challenges: cost-share and associated costs (e.g. visa fees)
	External challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logistical, administrative issues • Partner follow-through 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visa processing and travel restrictions
		LARGER HEIS, WITH A DEDICATED INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE	SMALLER HEIS, WITHOUT A DEDICATED INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION INFRASTRUCTURE
Internal development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaled-up 100K programs institutionally • Strengthened inter-departmental relations • Allocated more funding and expand international education programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased leadership buy-in • Learned and defined grant-writing and implementation processes • Set a precedent to build a dedicated programmatic area
External partnerships development		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term partnerships and programs • Scaled-up programs, new funding streams • Long-lasting research collaborations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A precedent to find new partnerships and funding streams • Long-lasting research collaborations

processes, look for other funding streams and spark crucial conversations with leadership about building an international education infrastructure. Indeed, for most LAC and U.S. HEIs with limited capacity, sustainability of external partnerships becomes an issue once the funding cycle ends, while some larger LAC HEIs, most four-year U.S. HEIs and consortiums members, are able to maintain collaboration channels and programming that outlast

the funding. Nonetheless, **100K grants have served as a platform to increase collaboration within institutions, set a successful precedent for expanding international education initiatives, particularly regional programming, and fuel a conversation about the importance of intra-regional cooperation between higher education institutions.**

IV. DONOR-PARTNER ENGAGEMENT AND PERCEIVED IMPACT

Understanding donor-partners' motivations to contribute to the 100K Fund, as well as their perceived return on investment, is crucial in order to strategically and effectively attract new donor-partners, while strengthening relationships with current partners. This section focuses on two areas of donor-partner impact: strategic and institutional impact for the funding organization and perceived impact on grantees—both HEIs and students. The perceived impact of the 100K Fund varies depending on the type of donor, their government or industry affiliation, and their criteria for investment. **Surveyed donor-partners saw their contributions to the 100K Fund as meaningful for beneficiaries and aligned with their own mission and objectives.** For larger donor-partners, however, their contribution to the fund was often just one component of a robust philanthropic strategy, while smaller donor-partners saw the 100K Fund as a chance to leverage their resources to reach students across the hemisphere.

Specifically, donor-partners' motivations for contributing to the 100K Fund varied according to their status as a public or private institution, their operational capacity and level of expertise in higher education (HE) programs. All donor-partners surveyed and interviewed in this study decided to partner with the 100K Fund mainly because of 100K's thematic alignment with their corporate social responsibility (CSR) goals or mission, industry or DEI focus. Government donor-partners saw additional benefits in externalizing the management of public funds to a third party, while Latin American and Caribbean donor-partners also hoped to strengthen their relationships with U.S. government institutions. Finally, donor-partners with more extensive HE operations envisioned their contribution to the 100K Fund as an addition to their investment portfolio, whereas their smaller-scale counterparts hoped 100K might become their flagship higher education exchange program.

Donor-partners in this study value the impact of the 100K Fund on their grantees more so than the impact their partnerships could have on their own strategic,

institutional goals. However, both private and public sector donor-partners report the 100K Fund having a valuable impact on their relationships with U.S. government institutions and the academic sector in both the U.S. and the LAC region. Strengthening relationships with the U.S. government was unsurprisingly more valued by LAC donor-partners, while forming new connections in the academic sector was more significant for smaller, national donor-partners without expertise in HE programming or an existing network of HEIs. Overall, governmental institutions knew more about their specific competition's impact on HEIs and students, which they assessed very positively. Most private sector donor-partners had not systematically evaluated the impact of their contributions on students or HEIs but based on their own expertise, some identified strategies to further leverage the 100K Fund to maximize the impact of 100K grants.

The 100K Fund draws on donor-partners from the U.S. private sector and the public and private sectors in LAC.

The findings described below are disaggregated by donor-partners' country of origin (U.S. or Latin American and Caribbean countries), donor-partner type (governmental or non-governmental), and by private sector industry and size. Surveys were sent to 20 out of the 28 private and public donors that have contributed to the 100K Fund and yielded a total of 12 responses (42.8% of all current donors). The answers were disaggregated by country of origin (LAC or U.S.). Surveys asked donor-partners to reflect on the motivation for their contributions and their perceived impact. Additionally, eight interviews were conducted with representatives of four governmental partner institutions and four private sector donors, all of which had also responded to the survey.

The public sector partners interviewed included four training and higher education-focused entities within two regional governments. The four private companies and foundations interviewed for this study represented three of the most common industries featured in the 100K Fund—banking, extractive industries and philanthropy. Survey data

was disaggregated by region or country, while interview data also illustrates differences between donor-partners with governmental affiliation, of varying sizes and across private sector industries.

The private sector donor-partners were also diverse in size, national origin and level of contribution (see Table 10). Two are transnational companies, headquartered in the U.S. and Europe, while two are national companies or foundations headquartered in Latin American or Caribbean countries. Two private sector donor-partners are also comparatively larger both in size (i.e., in operational capacity) and total revenue than the other two. There is also diversity in terms of the amount and duration of their contributions to the Fund. Generally, larger donor-partners, with more operational capacity, belonged in the medium to high contribution brackets.¹⁷

Criteria for Contributing

Donor-partners contributed based on the 100K Fund's thematic alignment with their institutional mandate, CSR priorities, a specific topic of interest to their industry or their DEI focus

Overall, donor-partners' main reason for contributing to the 100K Fund was to improve and expand access to student education exchanges and advance innovative HEI partnerships, either due to 100K's thematic alignment with

their mandate or philanthropic mission, or their interest in advancing innovation in their own industry. Differences in criteria between U.S. and LAC donor-partners were less significant than those between private and public donor-partners or between donor-partners with more and less operational capacity or a specific focus on higher education (HE). LAC donor-partners were generally more interested in strengthening their relationship with U.S. government institutions than were U.S. or transnational donor-partners, though that was not a primary motivation for donor-partners in any category. In addition, government donor-partners were attracted by the chance to transfer the management of public funds to external partners and avoid bureaucratic constraints. All interviewed donor-partners expressed a commitment to advancing international education opportunities, but for funders with extensive HE portfolios, the 100K Fund is one component of an integrated whole, while smaller donor-partners treated it as a flagship program.

All surveyed donor-partners, whether based in the U.S. or in a Latin American or Caribbean country, reported that **improving access to educational exchanges and training, as well as promoting innovative models of education partnerships, were their main motivations to contribute to the Fund.** Indeed, many of the survey respondents already focused their philanthropic or CSR investments on higher education, international exchanges, or expanding access to education. This was especially common among transnational corporations and U.S.-based donor-partners. Rather than a philanthropic focus on higher education, surveyed Latin American and Caribbean donor-partners

TABLE 10: INTERVIEWED DONOR-PARTNER CHARACTERISTICS

Source: Compiled by IAD based on 100K records.

PRIVATE/PUBLIC	ORGANIZATION SIZE	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
Public donor	N/A	Latin American country
Public donor	N/A	Latin American country
Public donor	N/A	Latin American country
Public donor	N/A	Latin American country
Private sector donor	Large, transnational	Transnational, European based
Private sector donor	Large, transnational	Transnational, U.S. based
Private sector donor	Small, national	Caribbean country
Private sector donor	Small, national	Latin American country

seemed more interested in promoting innovation and academic collaboration in specific areas related to their industries—for instance, renewable energies—as well as on expanding access to international education models in their countries.

According to survey responses, institutional or strategic objectives, such as bilateral relations with the U.S. or brand visibility, seemed to be somewhat less important than beneficiary impact to all donor-partners. Unsurprisingly, however, strengthening their country’s or institution’s relationships with U.S. government agencies and embassies was far more important to LAC donor-partners than to their U.S. counterparts—with 7 of 9 surveyed LAC companies ranking it as a top motivation to contribute. Other strategic objectives, such as promoting positive brand visibility, were comparatively less important to all surveyed donor-partners.

Beyond country-specific motivations, government donor-partners had different objectives for their contributions from private sector donor-partners. Governmental entities who partner with the 100K Fund are usually seeking to advance their institutional mandate, which is dictated by national priorities, and can shift with political administrations, while private sector donor-partners are motivated by their CSR goals, their mission or by innovation opportunities in their industries. **For governmental partners, the main criteria to contribute to the 100K Fund are (a) 100K’s alignment with their mandate and the possibility to adapt to their shifting national agenda, (b) the externalization of funds, to expedite processes and override bureaucratic constraints and (c) POA’s expertise and connection to U.S. HEIs.** Ultimately, the program’s strong reputation and attachment to the U.S. government was an extremely attractive aspect of the 100K Fund for governmental partners.

Despite differences in their institutional focus, the sample of governmental partners interviewed for this study identified a clear alignment between their mandate and 100K’s objectives. Two of the entities focus specifically on promoting higher education access, including international exchanges at the institutional and student levels, while the other institutions focus on professional and technical education as well as technological research. Additionally, the 100K Fund enabled them not only to advance their specific mandates but also to tailor their grant competitions to their policy agenda, which in turn, helped justify their unusual contributions to a collaborative, public-private 100K Fund. In the case of one government, 100K Fund’s partner entities were able to sponsor competitions about the peace building, agriculture and the arts—in

line with the recent national push to promote creative industries. Public partners also sought the opportunity to prioritize the participation of rural HEIs or institutions that were not typically awarded government funds for mobility.

“We were aligned with a public policy that, at that time, was focused on peacebuilding. The opportunity emerged to work with the United States Embassy through the Fund. [...] As a matter of fact, our 2018 competition was all about peacebuilding in rural areas, so that was the motivation. As a public entity, our focus and goals are always determined by the government’s national agenda.” – GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION

REPRESENTATIVE

Governmental partners were also motivated by the prospect of externalizing public funds to a non-governmental third party to avoid bureaucratic constraints and respond more efficiently to the needs of participants. Interviewed public sector donor-partners noted that bureaucratic processes within government agencies may not only lead to delays, but at times, compromise the implementation of such programs. All public sector donor-partners emphasized that POA’s transparent and rigorously reported execution was crucial given the evaluation and oversight processes often attached to public funding.

“Because of this partnership, a significant administrative burden was lifted off our team and taken on by POA. Working in government, one must go through a series of processes, follow certain procedures, and abide by regulations that cannot be avoided. When POA takes over the management of the program, these are no longer our procedures. There are things that a Ministry team would take longer to resolve due to the many procedures in place. POA is much more responsive because they are not as rigid. So, that solves a lot of things for

us.” – GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE

Ultimately, **POA’s operational rigor, their expertise in commonly featured competition themes, as well as their extensive network of connections with the U.S. academic sector, are all extremely attractive features to Latin American and Caribbean governmental partners.** Indeed, to on governmental institution, POA’s academic connections are the most valued feature of the Fund. They identify POA as a point of entry to access a larger number U.S. HEIs, and potentially engage them in a variety of research topics in the future.

Similar to governmental entities, the main motivation for non-governmental or private sector donor-partners to contribute to the 100K Fund is its thematic alignment

with either their corporate social responsibility objectives, their mission, or their industry. **The 100K Fund aligns with private sector donor-partners' goals through the program's (a) focus on higher education and intra-regional collaboration, (b) promotion of industry-specific themes, and (c) DEI lens.** For three of the private sector donor-partners interviewed, higher education was at the core of their philanthropic mission or CSR agenda.

Of these three donor-partners, one larger transnational corporation already has a highly developed in-house operation that oversees a portfolio of projects promoting collaboration between higher education institutions and international education grants. For them, the 100K Fund was a relatively small addition to this model.

"In this space, our philosophy is that everything adds up and that there is room to collaborate with other organizations. We do not see these initiatives as competing with what we have been doing for 20 years, but instead as opportunities for development and growth." —PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

On the other hand, for a national foundation that works closely with local universities and focuses on expanding access to study abroad, the 100K Fund stretched their offer from their usual student-level scholarships to include a program for institutional collaboration and sustainable regional exchange.

"This is the first time that we have participated in an international exchange project. We manage projects that fund students to study abroad, but at an individual level. An institutional exchange has never been done. We have contributed to various scholarship funds for students, but we had never worked on an initiative that had 100K's institutional focus." —PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

Alternatively, one of the private sector donor-partners contributed to the 100K Fund because of its thematic focus on sustainability and their commitment to workforce development in their industry. 100K grant competitions have funded many research and exchange programs focused on sustainable energy or similar fields, building strong credentials and an attractive precedent for this extractive company to sponsor a competition.

"I would say subject matter was most important—the focus on sustainability, on education and the opportunity to exchange ideas with U.S. institutions. And also to show people what we're all about, the fundamentals of the company, our sustainability focus." —PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

Similarly, three out of four interviewees cited **100K's focus on diversity and inclusion as an attractive reason to partner with the Fund, which was especially important for companies with a national focus.** In terms of more strategic, institutional objectives, only two private sector donor-partners mentioned the strengthening of bilateral relations with U.S. government institutions and U.S. embassies as a motivation to contribute to the Fund (see Table 11).

"We really liked the idea of it being a competition, because that way, we could provide opportunities to vulnerable students. For us, that is a very objective, supporting students who could not otherwise have access these kinds of programs [...] Considering the enormous database that the 100K Fund has, it seemed very interesting to us." —PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

Ultimately, **donor-partners with more expansive operational capacity approached their partnerships with the 100K Fund as an addition to an already articulated philanthropic strategy in HE, as opposed to smaller donor-partners with a national focus.** This distinction applies to both governmental and non-governmental donor-partners. Generally, larger, transnational donor-partners or those with a specific CSR focus on higher education operate on an additive model, whereby the 100K Fund is one of multiple funding areas to which they contribute. For smaller donor-partners, or donor-partners whose focus is not necessarily on expanding higher education networks, the 100K Fund became their flagship international education and/or workforce development program. Similarly, donor-partners without an in-house operation or even a specific focus on higher education, as well as those that lack established relationships with U.S. HEIs, find the fund's extensive academic network to be a compelling reason to contribute. Finally, the importance given to bilateral relations with the U.S. also varies across donor-partners—larger, international donor-partners are generally less interested in the bilateral relations that may result from their partnership with the 100K Fund, given that most of them already benefit from a close relation to the U.S. government, U.S. HEIs, as well as other national governments in the region.

TABLE 11: CRITERIA FOR CONTRIBUTING, BY DONOR-PARTNERS' OPERATIONAL CAPACITY

Source: Compiled by IAD.

	DONOR-PARTNERS WITH LARGER OPERATIONAL CAPACITY AND EXPERTISE IN HE	DONOR-PARTNERS WITH A SMALLER OPERATIONAL CAPACITY
Thematic alignment, impact on HE access and mobility	Additive model: 100K as another grant in their HE portfolio	Flagship initiative: HE program; regional exchange program; institutional partnership program
Institutional connections to the academic sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already benefit from established HEI networks • A motivation for some, to expand their networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key motivation to contribute to the Fund • A platform to promote future HE initiatives
Institutional connections to the U.S. government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already benefit from relationships with the U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key motivation • Increased exposure, reputational growth

Strategic Benefits

All donor-partners surveyed and interviewed benefited from their strengthened relationships to U.S. government institutions and with the academic sector to varying degrees, depending on their size and country of origin

Although donor-partners were more interested in maximizing the impact of their investments on beneficiaries, strengthening ties with U.S. institutions and with the academic sector in LAC and the U.S. was an important benefit of their contribution. This was especially true for Latin American donor-partners and those without an already established HE operation or institutional network. Governmental and non-governmental partners of similar sizes benefited from the Fund's impact on these relationships. Additionally, governmental institutions from the same country noted that their partnerships with the 100K Fund led to increased collaboration among education sector entities beyond 100K. Private sector donor-partners, particularly transnational corporations, also mention that the program's positive impact on the public policy discourse around hemispheric relations favored their current and future operations.

Surveyed donor-partners reported a strong alignment between their initial motivations for contributing to the 100K Fund and the benefits that they ultimately received after participating. The majority of Latin American and Caribbean contributors reported that their partnerships

with the 100K Fund helped strengthen their ties to the U.S. government, an aspect that was important to some degree for most respondents. In terms of academic ties, 6 out of 9 LAC donor-partners agreed that they have strengthened their ties with both U.S. and LAC HEIs as a result of their contribution, while U.S. donor-partners do not report significant impact on their partnerships with foreign HEIs. Finally, about two thirds of all surveyed donor-partners agreed that their partnership with the 100K Fund granted them increased positive visibility, despite it only being an important objective for a third of U.S. donor-partners and half of LAC donor-partners.

Despite intra-regional differences, private and governmental donor-partners emphasized common strategic benefits that resulted from their partnerships with the Fund. For public sector donor-partners, institutional benefits are measured directly by the impact 100K grants have on their grantees' development, in relation to their thematic priorities and strategic goals, such as increased mobility. Interestingly, private sector donor-partners similarly prioritized the program's impact on grantees over any strategic or institutional advancement. Nonetheless, beyond the program's impact on grantees, both governmental and private sector donor-partners reported that **their contribution to the 100K Fund has also (a) strengthened bilateral relations with U.S. government institutions and (b) increased access to the academic sector across the hemisphere.**

“As a government institution, our goal is not to receive any tax benefits, as could be the case for private sector companies or foundations. For us, the goal really is generating an impact on the issues featured in the grant competition, such as rurality and peace; promoting international programs in non-accredited institutions; increasing mobility rates or interculturality in technical institutes and colleges.” –

–GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE

Strengthening bilateral relations with the U.S. government was a valued, long-term benefit for governmental donor-partners from LAC. **For those who contributed to the 100K Fund more than once, forming lasting relationships with U.S. government institutions helped ensure the continuity of their programs through changing governments and administrations in their countries—and subsequently, shifting educational agendas and goals.** For large public agencies for whom the 100K Fund represents a relatively small investment, these relationships were deemed exponentially more valuable, since the legitimizing support of the U.S. government could result in the expansion of future mobility initiatives in the U.S. and beyond. In the past, these relationships also helped co-implementing governmental donor-partners troubleshoot common visa processing issues for student participants from LAC.

“Supporting this initiative that the Obama government established has resulted in an excellent relationship with Washington, which has helped us a lot [...] With new governments, our national objectives, missions, and interests might change. Yet, because of our relationship and 100K’s connection with the U.S. embassy, we had the opportunity to continue implementing the program through these changes.”

–GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE

“Our partnership with the 100K Fund may allow us to gain the support from the U.S. government for other exchange models in the future. We are building a relationship in order to scale up this and other projects. For now, this project, given the size of [our institution], is relatively small in terms of resources.”

–GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE

Even if private sector donor-partners had prior relationships with the U.S. government, they agreed that the opportunity to work closely with embassies and DOS was beneficial to promote future collaboration and gain support within their own organizations to increase investment in future mobility initiatives. Private sector donor-partners also reported that governmental relationships, as well as the exposure that 100K’s notoriety

granted them, led to reputational growth. For large, U.S.-based transnational corporations, contributing to the 100K Fund helped establish and improve their reputation in Latin American and Caribbean countries by building positive narratives around hemispheric relations. The 100K Fund also served as a platform for smaller companies to become more visible and showcase their innovative practices and professional opportunities. For instance, a local company valued the opportunity to give students a tour of their facilities and teach them about innovative practices in the extractive industry.

“We see the importance of society’s perception—it is a matter of reputation. It is essential that we continue building a relationship, more so with citizens than commercially. Transnational companies like us, that are headquartered in the U.S., should not be seen as something bad or something foreign—especially in the current landscape. We are perceived as being close to the U.S., and the narratives about our relationship as countries are very important.” –PRIVATE SECTOR

DONOR-PARTNER

Secondly, by strengthening their ties with the U.S. academic sector, governmental partners were able to identify topics of interest to U.S. scholars—which in turn, enabled them to shape their future goals and projects and leverage potential collaborations with top institutions. Furthermore, by learning about research trends in the U.S. and within the region, public donor-partners were able to compare and adapt their own workforce development and educational goals. To various degrees, private sector donor-partners also reported strengthening their relationships with the academic sector in the U.S. and LAC as a result of their partnerships with the Fund. For some foundations or corporations with a mission and CSR focus on HE, forming new institutional connections with HEIs has facilitated the expansion of their current project portfolio. Alternatively, companies without an HE focus have benefited from the research and technological exchange that resulted from the competition they sponsored.

“Identifying the areas of interest for U.S. universities was important to us, because we do not support research based on academic selection, but rather, based on industry and market demands. We were able to see whether our focus areas were of interest to top U.S. institutions.” –GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION

REPRESENTATIVE

Public sector donor-partners experienced increased collaboration with other public donor-partners from

the same sector. In one of the partner governments, the 100K Fund has created new and strengthened existing collaboration channels between governmental institutions with an education or training focus. During grant cycles, the participating entities would meet monthly to discuss themes and ensure that there were no overlaps. During these meetings, the agencies also discussed their other initiatives within the education sector and often shared best practices. Their collective work with the 100K Fund has ultimately catalyzed the need for further collaboration outside of 100K, and in the long term. Indeed, **when public donor-partners collaborate with the 100K Fund as co-implementers, the 100K model can support partner governments in strengthening their HE infrastructure and support networks.**

"I have never seen better collaboration at the government level than what I see right now. [...] Each institution has their own mission and that is the way we work, but 100K has pushed us to coordinate better, so that there are no repetitions in competition themes. I see a great opportunity to strengthen inter-institutional work, even when we don't have open competitions. With funds or without funds, we can still work together and support HEIs in an innovative and creative way."

—GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE

Perceived Impact on Grantees

Public donor-partners assessed the Fund's impact on their grantees positively, while some private sector donor-partners, especially large contributors, suggested the impact could be scaled up

All surveyed donor-partners prioritized the impact of their contributions on grantees over their own institutional and strategic advancement. However, only government donor-partners seemed to have systematically reviewed the impact of the 100K Fund on winning HEIs and students. Generally, government partners agreed that the impact of the 100K Fund on grantees was substantial and long-lasting at the level of HEIs—particularly for smaller and rural HEIs that had not previously participated in international mobility initiatives. Private sector donor-partners, for whom 100K represented their first or only intra-regional mobility initiative, were generally satisfied with the impact it had on grantees, while larger, transnational donor-partners identified several strategies

to maximize the impact of the fund on student mobility and HEI collaboration (see Section V).

To inform donor-partners of their project's impact, POA drafts and submits progress narrative and financial reports on a quarterly basis, as well as a cumulative final report, to all donor-partners. These reports give details on activities related to the specific 100K grant competitions and on the progress of the 100K grant-winning teams that are funded by each donor. Government donor-partners interviewed for this study seemed to have a much better understanding of their contribution's impact on HEIs, student development and partnership sustainability than their private sector counterparts. This is probably due to the extensive evaluation processes that government regulations require on the use of their resources. The four governmental institutions interviewed reported a direct line of communication with their grantees, which also helped them monitor and ensure lasting impact.¹⁸

Overall, government partners of the 100K Fund agree that 100K grants had a transformative impact on students' professional trajectories, while sustainably strengthening HEIs capacity for inter-regional collaborations.

Additionally, public donor-partners also report that through their contribution to the Fund, they have successfully advanced their diversity, equity and inclusion goals, both at the student and institutional level.

"For me, the most gratifying part is seeing people whose lives have changed because they participated in this process. Seeing it reach corners of the country that never thought this could be done, that was also very gratifying."

—GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE

Two of the four public donor-partners interviewed for this study emphasized the long-term, catalytic effect of the grant on the LAC winning institutions' abilities to connect to U.S. HEIs and in some cases, maintain their student exchange programs. This is valued by two governmental partner institutions who prioritized the participation of non-accredited, often rural, HEIs that are not typically able to engage in inter-regional or international collaborations. Governmental donor-partners who usually manage student-level operations also emphasized the catalytic effect of the 100K Fund on participating students and their professional and academic trajectories. One interviewee explained that through their student networks, they are able to follow alumni's academic and career paths, which now include pursuing graduate studies locally or in the U.S.

“[Our] institutions are acquiring increasingly better skills to collaborate with U.S. institutions and make better proposals with a wider reach and more ambitious objectives [...] We believe that this kind of collaboration tools produce extraordinary results. The institutions have really taken advantage of these grants and the benefits have multiplied.”

—GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVE

Although POA shares the same impact data with all donor-partners, the non-governmental donor-partners interviewed in this study were generally less familiar with their contributions’ impact on grantees’ development, unless they worked directly with local institutions or students. The exception to this trend was one private sector donor-partner who reported having studied the impact of the 100K Fund on students and HEIs closely. Nonetheless, for companies for whom the 100K Fund constituted their flagship institutional exchange program, the impact of their investment on HEIs collaboration and student development was perceived very positively.

All private donor-partners believe in the potential of the 100K Fund to impact students and expand training and exchange opportunities. Several noted that the 100K Fund could expand upon the current operational scope, incorporate an even more extensive network of donor-partners and stimulate greater student mobility. One transnational corporation, which benefited from an established in-house operation to support HE programs, reported that the program’s impact remains relatively limited when compared to other projects in their portfolio. According to this donor, the 100K Fund was envisioned

to increase student mobility at a much larger scale and it has potential to fulfill this initial promise by significantly increasing the scope and scale of their projects and the number of donor-partners involved. A set of specific recommendations on leveraging the 100K Fund to maximize the impact of grants is explored in depth in the next section.

“For us, it was a relatively small program in relation to all the efforts we coordinate on these issues. [However], given the potential that the program had in its theoretical vision, in its execution we fell short.” —PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

Ultimately, all donor-partners surveyed and interviewed for this study expressed interest in continuing to support the program, including possibly increasing their investment along with their level of involvement in order to fulfill the potential of the 100K model. **Donor-partners agree that their contributions to the 100K Fund have generated significant benefits for their current and future initiatives in higher education and institutional exchange by strengthening their relationships with U.S. governmental institutions and the academic sector, as well as by increasing their visibility and improving their reputation through the program’s notoriety.** Additionally, governmental donor-partners assessed the impact of the 100K Fund on grantees very positively. Indeed, the positive impact that participation in the fund has generated—for donor-partners, HEIs and students alike—is a strong argument for building upon the current model to increase impact.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

100,000 Strong in the Americas is an impactful initiative that effectively catalyzes student development and mobility across the Americas, builds internal capacity in HEIs and expands inter-regional partnerships. Higher education institutions, students and donor-partners firmly believe in 100K's transformational potential and share a desire to see its continued success. This section outlines a set of recommendations oriented towards making 100K-funded programs and partnerships even more effective. These recommendations are grounded in the experiences of participants and donor-partners, as well as the specific suggestions relayed by interviewees and surveyed grantees in the context of this study. The first five recommendations highlight areas of opportunity in the implementation of 100K grants and programs, which largely fall under the scope of 100K's current model and operations. The final three recommendations explore strategies to expand the 100K Fund and further leverage current donor-partnerships.

Recommendations to Maximize the Impact of 100K Programs and Grants

1. Strengthen and monitor inclusion-focused student recruitment and selection strategies by offering technical support to HEIs.

According to surveyed institutions, 100K student cohorts were consistently more diverse than their HEI's overall student population. As described in Section II, all HEIs interviewed in this study made concerted efforts to employ DEI-focused recruitment practices. U.S. HEIs were especially successful in increasing the number of racial minority students recruited through 100K-funded programs when compared to the national average. Nonetheless, U.S. and LAC HEIs generally struggled to implement their DEI strategies and meet their own recruitment goals due to a number of barriers, such as low levels of student interest or visa restrictions. Some LAC HEIs also established

academic and linguistic selection criteria that inadvertently advantaged students of higher socioeconomic standing.

The 100K Fund's current RFPs lists DEI-focused selection strategies as a criterion. Nonetheless, even in cases in which HEIs specified their demographic targets, representatives admitted it was extremely challenging to implement their strategy as planned. **In order to support the effective implementation of DEI policies at the institutional level, HEIs may benefit from additional guidance and support from POA and WHA/DOS during proposal writing workshops, as well as through the grant implementation period.**

To further democratize the student participant selection and recruitment processes, a number of systematic barriers, which may fall beyond the scope of the 100K Fund's current operations, would also need to be addressed. These mainly include (a) limited linguistic skills which result in a daunting language barrier, especially for LAC students, (b) visa and travel restrictions which may systematically exclude students from participating and (c) relatively low levels of interest in the LAC region among U.S. students.

2. Continue to connect *100K Strong in the Americas* to other DOS programs or departments to further strengthen DOS' capacity to address systematic barriers to student participation in academic exchange programs, including 100K, such as lack of language abilities or low interest in or knowledge of LAC countries.

The lack of sufficient Spanish, Portuguese or English language skills was identified as the most significant barrier students faced and a factor hampering their ability to participate in 100K-funded programs in the first place. Encouraging institutions to redefine language requirements for prospective students, as well as suggesting and providing access to resources for strengthening linguistic abilities (e.g., an open-access pre-trip language course), may partially address this challenge. However, these issues are often rooted in systemic deficiencies in education systems across the hemisphere, which affect vulnerable students disproportionately, and are beyond the current operational scope of 100K.

Therefore, **it may be worth strengthening existing pipelines between 100K and other programs within WHA or in other DOS offices**—for instance, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs’ (ECA) exchange programs or study abroad network (e.g., Fulbright or the International Visitor Leadership Program), or other initiatives such as EducationUSA or American English. Currently, 100K competitions are often promoted widely not only through POA, WHA and U.S. Embassies but also in EducationUSA’s networks in Latin America and other DOS divisions’ channels. U.S. embassies and their Public Affairs teams are actively involved in 100K promotion and training efforts. Additionally, HEIs that participate in 100K often have connections to other DOS programs. In the past, several 100K programs were created and managed by faculty who had participated in Fulbright or IVLP programs.

To address remaining barriers, these collaborations could be further systematized and scaled up. For instance, integrating DOS foreign language learning programs, fellowships and other professional development pipelines as optional additions to the 100K experience may help increase U.S. students’ interest in and commitment to studying in Latin American and the Caribbean countries. Similarly, integrating ECA’s English language programs for LAC students into 100K’s model may further equity goals and expand access for some potential applicants who may otherwise not meet the strict English language requirements set forth by competitive selection processes in their institutions.

Visa requirements and travel restrictions can also exclude certain LAC students from participating in 100K-funded programs, which in turn, hinders 100K’s efforts to expand access and inclusion, since these are often tied to family wealth. WHA and POA work closely with embassy teams to respond to visa requests for 100K cohorts, and many U.S. embassies have specific systems in place for 100K-funded program requests. In the past, LAC HEIs have been able to leverage these ties to help troubleshoot visa processing delays or denials, yet this continues to be a very significant challenge for all institutions. Continuing to systematically strengthen the program’s ties to local consulates, as well as embassies, may help address this issue by building a common understanding of the programs’ objectives and short-term model. In addition, informing winning institutions of visa processing timelines and requirements early on will also allow them to mitigate potential processing delays.

3. Curate a more active alumni network, for both HEIs and students, to sustain the catalytic effect of the grant beyond initial participation.

HEIs and students have been generally successful at maintaining their relationships with partner HEIs, even if their student exchange programs were ultimately discontinued after the 100K grant. Nonetheless, HEIs agree that an alumni network would be extremely valuable, as it would allow them to not only connect with potential future partners in LAC or the U.S., but also to meet professionals with similar expertise and interests.

Currently, the 100K team at POA and WHA/DOS supports the 2,300 members of the *100,000 Strong in the Americas* Innovation Network (IN), whose members include HEIs, U.S. embassies and Education USA representatives. Joining the Innovation Network is free and it is also a requirement for the 100K grant application process. The IN serves as a platform for U.S. and LAC HEIs to learn about 100K grants, events and conferences, join training webinars and connect with others. The platform includes direct message and announcement board functions, as well as a member directory managed by POA. There is some anecdotal evidence of IN members connecting through the platform and using the group directory to find potential partners, yet these interactions have not been systematically tracked. However, based on the data collected, this study did not find evidence of the network currently being used to benefit further collaboration among members once HEIs have implemented their programs or to facilitate new partnerships among alumni.

As an extension of the Innovation Network, a more sophisticated and interactive alumni platform could foster more collaborations between HEI alumni and increased hemispheric mobility. Indeed, 100K’s extensive HEI network in the U.S. and LAC is among its most attractive features to institutions and donor-partners alike—and one which is worth expanding into a student alumni resource. Beyond the centralized sharing of resources and announcements, this expanded IN could allow HEIs to reconnect with other alumni and offer a space to discuss and share best practices among members. Although IN members already have access to some of these functions, it seems they are not currently being used to their fullest potential and may require curating a more tight-knit, committed community. Members may be interested in forming working groups within this network to address specific challenges related to mobility, or academic and research topics of interest. In addition to building a growing community of professionals to foster inter-regional partnerships and mobility, this platform would facilitate

new connections between smaller institutions without the operational capacity to form new partnerships, which may foster consortia and result in larger, more sustainable partnerships to compete in future 100K grants.

Conceivably, an alumni network could also support student-level membership. **Participating students emphasized the value of a platform or network that would allow them to connect with their host university faculty and students and to stay informed about new academic, mobility and professional opportunities.** Although some student cohorts have attempted to stay in touch with their peers, no systematic effort has been made by their HEIs or 100K to connect alumni. In fact, two U.S. students who attended the same institution and knew each other were unaware of the other's participation in 100K-funded programs before being involved with this study. Beyond maintaining their relationships with their program's cohort, 100K students are interested in connecting with other alumni from their own and other HEIs, either domestically or abroad. Latin American and Caribbean students were particularly interested in the idea of an alumni platform or resource to share new academic and professional opportunities, as well as 100K's open competitions or other grants.

The proposed functions of the alumni network would support students to stay connected with peers and faculty, collaborate on new projects and be exposed to academic and professional opportunities in other HEIs or countries. Naturally, because the 100K Fund operates at the institutional level and does not work directly with students, incorporating students into an alumni network may be logistically challenging. In order to facilitate this, 100K would need to rely on HEIs to subscribe their past and future student cohorts to this service. Currently, there is no centralized student database of 100K student alumni, the construction of which would be an enormously valuable first step towards building a platform. 100K can offer the connections, platform and name recognition that will make such a network attractive and useful to alumni. This will demand a systematic effort to request all alumni HEIs to share contact information for their student cohorts. In the future, POA may also advertise this service to all winning HEIs as an additional benefit and request a list of all their participating students.

Overall, the development, monitoring and management of this extended platform would certainly require additional resources and investment from 100K. A first step might be to create a survey and distribute it to 100K alumni in order to evaluate their current use of the IN and identify

the specific features that most interest and benefit members. POA would then have to design or outsource a multi-function platform and allocate human resources to mediate the content and best practices shared on it. The research, planning and facilitation of member or subcommittee meetings would similarly require additional human capacity and expertise on higher education and mobility issues in the U.S. and Latin American and Caribbean contexts. **Nonetheless, based on the findings of this study, the return on the short-term 100K grants, in terms of HEI and student impact, could be exponentially increased through the development of an alumni network.** Ultimately, this network would also help bolster 100K's name recognition among more grantees—including students, who are at times unaware of the Fund's role in their ability to travel abroad.

4. Consider extending some 100K grants to cover two to three-year funding cycles for institutions without established international education operations.

Even though 100K's model is designed to jumpstart collaboration, in order to reach institutions with limited capacity or experience, multi-cycle grants may be the most effective form of *seed capital*. **Receiving two or more 100K grants, even if they are for different projects and/or partnerships, was the common denominator for many HEIs' success in sustainably maintaining not only their partnerships with other HEIs but also their student-level programming.** Furthermore, through multiple grants, HEIs without an established international education operation have been able to showcase the potential impact of an institution-wide study abroad program and set a precedent to justify internal investment in future initiatives. At the student level, program sustainability can lead to increased student interest and more diverse candidate pools. As outlined in Section II, word-of-mouth is an important promotional channel for this opportunity, particularly between students. A single funding cycle, especially in smaller institutions, may limit the number of student cohorts that are able to benefit from the grant and, as such, eliminate the potential for peer recruitment channels.

Winning several 100K grants is not common, nor a specific objective under the current model. To date, there have only been 5 sets of partnerships that received more than one 100K grant with the same partners but to support different projects, while only one in which the grant was used to expand on a previously 100K-funded program. **Incorporating multi-year funding as a new grant category may indeed have important implications in terms of fundraising, donor-partner engagement and**

reorganization of current funds. However, as illustrated in the previous section, donor-partners are generally keen to increase their contributions and level of engagement if it were to result in significantly increased impact on HEI development and partnership sustainability, as well as overall student mobility. There is strong evidence that multi-year grants have a significantly larger impact on all of those indicators, by accelerating HEIs' ability to support study abroad programming internally and to maintain partnerships with other HEIs, as well as their capacity to increase the overall number of student cohorts that travel abroad. This evidence could certainly be used to leverage new funding models that donor-partners can support.

5. Build more systematic relationships between private sector donors and grantees in order to expand skills development opportunities.

Fostering a connection between grantees and donors is not an objective of the 100K model as it is currently conceived, yet these relationships could enhance the impact of the program. As outlined in Section III, despite POA and DOS' concerted efforts to publicize and showcase donor-partners' contributions through major visibility events and conferences, among other channels, most winning HEIs do not seem to have a meaningful relationship with sponsoring companies. This is especially true for U.S. HEIs, most of which had no direct relationship with their donor. Interestingly, a number of LAC HEIs had prior connections to their sponsoring companies, but they only realized the donor-partners' involvement after receiving and implementing the grant. Only in a few cases did LAC HEIs proactively capitalize on their previous or recent relationships with donor-partners in order to offer visiting students the opportunity to connect with notable stakeholders in their prospective professional fields. Given private sector donors' expressed interest in connecting with HEIs within their countries and abroad, facilitating more opportunities for winning HEIs and their sponsoring companies to form a lasting relationship could be beneficial for all. **Indeed, these relationships could lead to future collaborations between HEIs and donor-partners, as well as more professional opportunities for students.**

Similarly, most students are not aware of the specific companies that sponsored their programs or even of the existence of the 100K Fund. Generally, LAC students knew more about the companies and foundations that

sponsored their competition than U.S. students, since they were more likely to have participated in visits to donor-partner sites or headquarters or attended embassy events in their home country—all of which were highlighted as extremely valuable experiences. Three Latin American students in the focus group specifically mentioned that connecting with their sponsor's representatives was a valuable professional opportunity, particularly since they are interested in pursuing a professional career in that industry. One U.S. student identified his visit to a Chevron drilling site in Argentina as the most professionally valuable experience of his time abroad. The 100K Fund should take advantage of these organically emerging experiences to systematically promote student-donor-partner relationships and enhance alumni's professional development beyond the scope of the current program. Practically, this could consist of integrating a visit to a donor-partner worksite or facility for all cohorts whose program directly relates to the sponsoring company's industry, or simply by arranging a meet and greet upon students' return to their home country.

Practically, for POA, carrying out this recommendation will likely involve working more closely with donor-partner companies to systematically offer grantees the possibility to arrange visits to donor-partner sites or even initiate research collaborations. Evidently, this would be more successful and relevant with donor-partners who sponsor competitions related to their own industries. Indeed, several donor-partners expressed their interest in collaborating more closely with HEIs on particular topics of interest to their work. Simultaneously, the 100K team would need to facilitate a closer relationship between donor-partners and grantees, beginning after receipt of the grant to avoid compromising the impartiality of the selection process. In doing so, HEIs could express their interest in a particular donor-partner with whom they have previously collaborated or are interested in connecting. Fostering this relationship throughout the 100K experience could facilitate long-term connections between donor-partners and HEIs, and even promote future collaborations on skills development initiatives for more students.

Recommendations to Expand the 100K Fund and Further Leverage Current Partnerships

While the previous set of recommendations largely fall under the current operational scope of 100K as it exists today, the following recommendations would likely require substantial additional investment and transformation of the 100K model. Nonetheless, based on the findings of this study, these adjustments to expand and improve the 100K Fund could push this initiative to more fully achieve its potential.

6. Further utilize some 100K Fund donor-partners' operational capacity and expertise in higher education, international education programming and specific industries.

One of the key reasons for government donor-partners to contribute to the 100K Fund was to externalize the operational processes attached to the funds. Alternatively, **several private sector donor-partners expressed their desire to be more deeply involved in the grant implementation process.** Although the 100K team provides private sector donor-partners with opportunities to collaborate in RFP design and theme definition, many are additionally interested in overseeing the implementation of other elements, such as DEI student selection and recruitment strategies. In previous competitions, a few donor-partners report being less active in their involvement due to the relatively limited impact of the 100K grant within their portfolio but emphasized that they would be interested in contributing more to the 100K Fund in order to justify more involved participation in the future, including the development of much more specific, practical competition themes related to their industries and organizational needs.

"I felt that although they executed the program really well, it was somewhat rigid. We would have liked to delve a bit deeper into the themes and innovation opportunities that exist within these themes and that could benefit different parts of the country [...] the 100K Fund remained at a more theoretical level, and we consider that there was an opportunity to target more specific challenges" —PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

"We always need to connect it a lot to the business and to the foundation for it to work. Developing projects with a relevant thematic focus can be very valuable. [We'd like] to be more involved or informed throughout the process and to connect more directly with universities." —PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

Furthermore, many of the private and public donor-partners that contribute to the 100K Fund are already invested in improving higher education and expanding international academic collaboration, either as a priority for their CSR goals or as part of their institutional mission. As such, a number of these institutions, companies and foundations rely on a highly developed, in-house operation to manage a portfolio of projects and grants with goals similar to those of the 100K Fund. Two of the donor-partners interviewed in this study expressed their interest in finding opportunities for strategic collaboration with the 100K Fund, through which they could offer their networks' support and counsel to advance the goals of the program.

In order to begin expanding these collaborations, it might be useful to further explore the higher education project portfolios and operational capacity at donor-partner companies and assess their alignment with 100K's mission. Based on this study's findings, the 100K team should also discuss and re-assess donor-partner companies' desired level of involvement and define new, more ambitious goals and opportunities for collaboration.

7. Promote the contributions of new donor-partners and create an Innovation Fund Donor Network to exchange best practices and foster higher donor-partner engagement.

Of the private sector donor-partners interviewed in this study, only two representatives reported having a relationship with other funders, which in fact, preceded their collaboration with the 100K Fund. However, all interviewees expressed their interest in strengthening their relationships with other partners of the Fund. Currently, 100K hosts a number of visibility events at embassies and in the U.S. which have successfully connected donor-partners from across different countries. Although these external events have been extremely successful in promoting the 100K model and showcasing impact, a number of donor-partners reported they are not as conducive to fostering deeper or lasting collaboration opportunities between Fund partners.

Alternatively, many representatives suggested that the 100K Fund has the potential to function as a network of

corporations, institutions or foundations from a variety of sectors with common philanthropic goals, somewhat similar to [RedEAmérica](#)—a regional network that engages companies and organizations from different industries to collaborate on building more sustainable communities through a variety of projects. The 100K Fund could function as a similar platform for higher education-focused social action and investment. A network of this kind would undoubtedly foster new connections between members and opportunities to collaborate on projects and initiatives, yet it would also promote further commitment and engagement with 100K’s mission. Indeed, it may serve to bolster the Innovation’s Fund reputation and recognition and in turn, attract new donor-partners.

WHA and POA would need to carefully specify the characteristics and membership criteria for such a network. On one hand, the majority of donor-partners agree that in order to present a donor-partner network as a key benefit for 100K Fund contributors, the number of qualifying partners would first have to grow significantly. Private sector donor-partners emphasize that regardless of contribution amounts, the 100K Fund should seek to increase the overall number of partners. Even if these partners’ contributions are proportionally smaller, the more names that are associated with the fund, the more private sector actors will be interested in partnering with 100K. Additionally, a more expansive network would certainly benefit grantees as much as it would benefit contributing partners. On the other hand, a smaller, selective network of highly committed donor-partners may facilitate more meaningful connections and attract high caliber partners.

“The 100K Fund involves donors from different sectors. I believe that promoting this network of 100K donors to design projects and collaborate with each other could be very interesting. I think that what we are doing right now is always bilateral, but there is a whole network of very interesting contacts. We are really interested in utilizing this existing network to promote new ideas, projects and dialogues.”

—PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

“As we make the 100K Fund more inclusive, I believe that it is important to increase the number of companies involved. I think that a different, more inclusive model of financing, that leverages the resources of the businesses that we have, would be very positive.”

—PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

8. Explore the possibility of adding mentorship or internship components to complement the 100K-funded exchange and training program by taking advantage of existing skills development pipelines in private sector foundations or donor corporations.

Developing their future workforce was not generally an intended goal for the majority of the donor-partners that contributed to the Fund. There is also no evidence that 100K alumni have been hired by any sponsoring company. Nonetheless, according to survey respondents, 67% of donor-partners agree that they would be interested in either hiring or mentoring 100K students, while another third might be open to it. No survey respondent expressed opposition to this idea. Indeed, while this is currently not a common trajectory for 100K alumni, many private sector partners offer their own internship and fellowship programs in industries that are very closely related to 100K’s commonly featured competition subjects.

“To do this, we have very solid channels and they work very well for us. In this case [100K], we didn’t do it because that would require us to have a much more active role in the competition, defining what we’re looking for and the criteria for selecting candidates [...]. If we were to have this greater commitment, we would like a more active role.”

—PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

All of the private sector donor-partners interviewed in this study agreed that they would be interested in exploring opportunities to integrate 100K-funded programs into their own mentorship or internship programs, or even their workforce development initiatives. Representatives agreed that adding this pipeline to 100K-funded programs could be enriching for students as well as for their own companies. One of the donor-partners emphasized that it would be extremely valuable for their company to mentor or hire local students, as well as students from other countries, that have received specialized training in cutting-edge technology of interest to their work. Donor-partners emphasized that for this add-on model to succeed, donor-partner companies would need to take on a much more active role in the selection of students.

“I think it could look something like finding talented youth in Latin American universities who were going to do an intensive summer program in high tech topics, for example, that would be complementary to our work.”

—PRIVATE SECTOR DONOR-PARTNER

VI. CONCLUSION

Overall, mobility across the hemisphere remains low and the opportunities that come with it, unexplored. To fill this gap, seven years ago, *100,000 Strong in the Americas* (100K) set out to build a network of institutional partnerships that could sustainably increase the overall number and diversity of students participating in exchange and training opportunities across the Western Hemisphere, and strengthen the ties between the U.S. and other countries in the region. Through an unparalleled public-private sector collaboration, the 100K Fund has supported almost 500 HEIs in the development of new partnerships and exchanges that promote not only educational programming but innovative workforce development, as well. As a result, 100K has enriched the academic and professional trajectories of over 9,000 students and hundreds of faculty and staff and catalyzed further mobility and intra-regional cooperation.

At each level of implementation, from student programming to HEI partnership development and donor-partner contributions, 100K has had a transformational impact. 100K-funded programs enable students to advance, launch or even transform their academic and professional trajectories, while planting a seed for lasting, collaborative networks across the hemisphere. 100K also serves as a platform to increase collaboration within HEIs, set a successful precedent for expanding international education initiatives, and fuel a conversation about the importance of intra-regional cooperation between higher education institutions. Ultimately, donor-partners'

contributions to the 100K Fund have generated significant benefits for their current and future initiatives in higher education and institutional exchange by strengthening their relationships with U.S. governmental institutions and the academic sector, as well as by increasing their visibility through the program's strong reputation. Students, faculty and donor-partners all express their interest in continuing to support 100K and ensure its success over time.

100K has established a respected, recognizable brand that has the potential to expand and become more sustainable. Given the current model, the program's impact could be maximized by (a) facilitating alumni and donor-partner networks, (b) ensuring the effective implementation of DEI strategies, (c) considering longer funding cycles, (d) increasing the number of donor-partners and fostering deeper engagement with current partners and (e) strengthening relationships between donor-partners and grantees, perhaps through the addition of internship pipelines. In addition to the current model, there is an opportunity to leverage 100K's positive name recognition and experience to address systematic barriers in collaboration with other DOS programs, and in turn, broaden the mission of this successful, targeted initiative to impact other areas of hemispheric cooperation.

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Endnotes

1. Data retrieved from Open Doors (2019) by the IIE. Accessed at: <https://www.iie.org/opendoors>.
2. NAFSA (2019) 'Trends in U.S. Study Abroad' based on IIE data. Accessed at: <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/trends-us-study-abroad>.
3. IESALC, UNESCO (2019)
4. ACE (2017)
5. Adapted from Villanueva and Shepard (2016)
6. Villanueva and Shepard (2016)
7. NAFSA (2016)
8. NAFSA (2017)
9. Abera et al., (2019)
10. It is worth noting that U.S. HEIs report statistics on the diversity of student populations to the U.S. Department of Education, a practice which is not as common for all Latin American and Caribbean countries, but which may already raise awareness and promote strategies among U.S. HEIs to address these issues.
11. Based on the survey responses, data on disability from LAC HEIs was lacking and not entirely reliable. Thus, this indicator has been excluded from the report.
12. Data retrieved from Open Doors (2019) by the IIE. Accessed at: <https://www.iie.org/opendoors>
13. IESALC (2020)
14. Cronquist and Fiszbein (2017)
15. In the case of U.S. students, focus group participants were either completing their undergraduate degrees, had begun their graduate studies, or were working in a temporary professional setting that was not aligned to their career plans. As such, there isn't enough evidence to evaluate the impact of 100K-funded programs on their professional trajectories, beyond the foreseeable benefits of the skills they developed during their stays in Latin American and Caribbean institutions.
16. This evaluation did not encounter any evidence of LAC HEIs operating in a consortium model. However, further research that samples several HEIs within one LAC country may indicate otherwise. According to this study's findings, the consortium model could be equally successful among LAC HEIs.
17. Lower bracket < \$250,000; medium bracket \$250,000 to \$700,000; high > \$700,000 (total investment).
18. One of these public entities had not yet implemented their exchange program due to COVID-19, and thus, could not comment on their grantees' experience.



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