



## **Input to the North America Strategy for Higher Education Cooperation 2012-2015**

*The U.S. embassy is pleased to learn that the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research has decided to extend its North America Strategy for Higher Education Cooperation until 2015. While noting the welcome increase in student exchange between the U.S. and Norway for the past few years, we are still far from the peak numbers of the 1980s, so we intend to work energetically and creatively to interest more Norwegian and American students in an exchange experience, and in fostering more collaboration between researchers. We deeply appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft 2012-2015-strategy.*

### **Priorities and measures 2012-2015**

*Collaboration at government level and network arenas*

*The Transatlantic Education Forum is a valuable meeting place for many of the various stakeholders with an interest in student and research mobility between Norway and North America, as is the yearly Transatlantic Science Week. However, the total U.S. participation at the previous Science Week gatherings has been slightly disappointing. We believe that this may be due to insufficient marketing towards the academic public in the U.S. The U.S. embassy has offered to help MER promote this year's Science Week as well as help find appropriate U.S. speakers to draw more participants to the sessions, and we will continue to offer our help and support.*

#### **Using Science Week as a Lever**

For the past year, the U.S. embassy has been involved in the establishment of the proposed *Peder Sather Centre for Advanced Study and Research* at the University of California, Berkeley. Among other things, we funded and organized a visit by Dean John McKee from Berkeley, and when he was here Ambassador White hosted a reception in honor of the proposed Peder Sather Centre for several dozen Norwegian and U.S. stakeholders, which resulted in organizations and universities offering their financial support to the project. As you are aware, the proposed center seeks to facilitate scholarly exchange and would also serve as the administrative hub for faculty research activity, student participation in the associated programs, and Center-sponsored public

events. We suggest that it might be useful to use a similar approach in the future, giving each year a focus and an endpoint for concrete action. Science Week would thus become a platform to announce new cooperative agreements or special projects, and a chance to interest new actors in similar arrangements; an example of success breeding success. This could help catch the attention of scientists and university administrators far afield.

### **Involving the Business Sector**

The U.S. embassy welcomes MER's suggestion to establish a dialogue with *the business sector* in order to support their and the Ministry's interest in strengthening higher education cooperation with North America. The U.S. has a long tradition of private business communities collaborating with public educational and research institutions, which have often proven mutually advantageous. We therefore encourage MER to send a delegation to the U.S. to learn more about how the business sector and the educational sector collaborate. The U.S. embassy would be more than happy to put together such a study trip for MER and other interested parties.

*Institutional partnerships and stronger correlation between higher education and research collaboration*

### **Partnership Programs for Higher Collaboration**

The U.S. embassy spends much of its time help link appropriate Norwegian and U.S. universities, think tanks and research organizations, and money is always an issue for a successful partnership (and often the main obstacle). We are therefore very pleased to see that MER will continue its Partnership Programs for Higher Collaboration as well as the project funding. However, we have been told by Norwegian university representatives that many have not heard about the SIU funding opportunities for various projects and programs, so again, more marketing may be needed. In addition, the deadlines for submitting proposals have often been judged too short.

### **Mobility of Students and Staff**

As MER is aware, the U.S. embassy believes that by reintroducing freshman year funding at all regionally accredited universities and colleges, the number of Norwegian students choosing to take a full undergraduate degree in the U.S. could increase. Studies show that there is a correlation between the age at which students are exposed to studies abroad and the likelihood that they choose to continue their studies abroad on a higher level, such as Master's and PhD. The same surveys show that lack of freshman year

funding *does* discourage students from applying to U.S. universities. We therefore encourage MER to consider reintroducing freshman year funding in the U.S.

The U.S. embassy has also included high school exchange programs as part of its educational exchange strategy between Norway and the U.S. This segment is valuable in recruiting students to higher education in North-America. It might be an idea to include non-profit high school exchange organizations such as YFU or AFS in some of the TEF meetings since they might have valuable input on recruiting students to North America.

## **ANSA**

As mentioned in the draft of the North America Strategy for Higher Education Cooperation 2012-2015, ANSA plays an important role with regards to information and accommodation for students who want to pursue a full degree abroad. In addition to ANSA, both the Fulbright office and the U.S. embassy are certified EducationUSA centers, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. EducationUSA is a network of advisors who provide free and unbiased information about studies in the U.S. The U.S. embassy has organized several seminars promoting higher education in the U.S., covering topics such as the undergraduate application process, LLM and MBA studies, as well as high school counselor workshops. We appreciate the participation of Minister Aasland, State Secretary Kyrre Lekve and other Ministry of Education and Research staff to these and other educational events.

## **Focused Matchmaking**

The U.S. embassy also recognizes the importance and effectiveness of establishing bilateral agreements between U.S. and Norwegian universities, to increase both student mobility and joint research projects. The U.S. embassy has organized various visits by U.S. university representatives to Norway, which have helped open discussions and raise the interest of potential partners. We believe this kind of “matchmaking” could be a powerful tool to develop successful, focused, sustainable collaborations between Norwegian and U.S. educational institutions. One recent example is the visit by representatives from of American University’s (Washington DC) *School of International Service* to Norway, when they met with officials from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences at Ås. There is another very successful collaboration already underway, between the University of Agder and the University of Nebraska in Omaha. It has been growing steadily for 10 years, and appears poised for more growth in the future.

Looking at similar projects around the world, three clear messages emerge:

- 1) Successful collaborations require genuine interest on both sides.
- 2) Successful collaborations often require champions, individuals who believe in the project passionately and are willing to make the extra effort needed to smooth over problems.
- 3) Successful collaborations usually require funding to get underway, even between two relatively well-endowed institutions.

We therefore encourage MER to continue offering project funding to U.S. and Norwegian education and research partnerships. The UiA-UNO project mentioned above received a significant boost from SIU, and it is showing vibrant growth.

In addition, the U.S. embassy encourage MER to support forums such as The Nobel Peace Prize Forum in Minneapolis which is a relatively simple method that supplies North American students with information about and generates interest in Norway.

### **Fulbright**

Lastly, the Fulbright program is the perfect example of a long and outstanding educational partnership between the U.S. and Norway. The U.S. embassy is very pleased to acknowledge the generous support of the Norwegian government, and we hope this will continue on for years to come.