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Bureau of Public Affairs • Department of State

US-China Educational and Cultural Exchanges

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Background: Cultural and educational exchanges have been a prominent feature of US-China relations since the 1972 Shanghai Communique in which both countries agreed to facilitate such activities. The exchanges provide symbol and substance for our growing relationship with China. A clearer understanding of each other's political and social life and cultural values advances the prospects for cooperation in foreign affairs, trade, and security. The US-People's Republic of China Cultural Exchange Agreement, signed January 31, 1979, established a general framework for cultural exchanges, including performing and graphic arts, journalism, and broadcasting.

Two implementing accords to the Cultural Agreement were signed for 1980-81 and 1982-83 and provided for specific activities such as a tour of the Jerome Robbins dance company and an exhibition in China of paintings from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The accords also covered student and specialist exchanges in the arts, media, and sports. There are currently more than 10,000 Chinese students enrolled in US schools, while more than 100 US colleges and universities now have educational exchanges with almost as many Chinese institutions.

1984-85 cultural program: A third implementing accord was signed during President Reagan's recent trip to China. It provided for an exhibition of paintings from the Brooklyn Museum that opened in Beijing during the visit. The exhibition, "Town and Country: Images of Urban and Rural Life in America," will be shown in Shenyang, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. The Chinese will send us an exhibition entitled "Five Painters," to be shown in Washington, Indianapolis, New York, and New Orleans.

Private programs: The Shanghai Communique discussed areas in which people-to-people exchanges would be mutually beneficial, and each side undertook to facilitate such contacts. Although the US Government has financed exchanges, further programs were carried out in the US by private organizations such as the National Committee on US-China Relations and the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China. Chinese "mass organizations" played similar roles in China. All exchanges were people-to-people until relations were normalized in 1979, when government-to-government exchanges began, but the bulk of expansion has taken place through private, nongovernment arrangements.

Official government programs depend heavily on the private sector. For example, American universities are crucial to the successful placement and training of Chinese students and scholars. University resources are used for grants, fellowships, and a variety of services. Private foundations and individuals contribute money and services for projects carried out by private sector exchange

organizations. The cooperation of American museums, theaters, artists, and others also is essential to the exchange program's success. The thousands of Americans who visit China or host Chinese visitors in the US are key participants in forging ties of friendship that strengthen the US-China relationship.

Problems in educational exchanges: The US welcomes China's students and educators and the free flow of ideas that exchanges provide. We accord high priority to programs under which Americans study and conduct research in China. We continue to encourage the expansion of private exchanges and direct university-to-university linkages. Educational exchanges contribute directly to increased understanding and help to advance US-China relations beyond the misperceptions of the past. Certain problems, however, persist and relate in large part to the differences in the US and Chinese systems. Commissions have been set up to provide forums for the discussion and resolution of problems. The US interest in obtaining greater access to Chinese scholarly resources for American exchange participants has been the subject of high-level discussions.