Welcome Letter

U.S. Department of State Workshop Opportunities

Arrival Photos

Mobility International USA

International Education Week

Photo Contest Announcement

FLEX Recruitment for 2015-2016

Welcome class of 2015!
Dear 2014-15 FLEX participants,

It is my great honor and pleasure to congratulate you on winning a FLEX scholarship and to welcome you to the U.S. Through three rounds of competition with 35,000 other students, you proved yourselves to be ready for this unique and life-changing experience. Congratulations!

We at American Councils would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderful year full of new impressions, personal growth and many “firsts” - your first day at your host school, your first time living in a small town, your first American meal, your first time making an International Education Week presentation - the list goes on. We even have a photo contest for your “firsts” - see page 2, and send us your entries!

It is inevitable that some of the things you imagined about the U.S. will not be as you expected, and you will also discover things you had never thought of before. These discoveries are part of being an exchange student, and you will be richer for having them.

Your year in the U.S. would not be possible without your host families. Your host family, your placement organization and your new friends will be by your side as you navigate this enriching year, through the fun times and the hard times. Remember what you learned at your pre-departure orientation, and use the talents and qualities that are inside you (and that made us select you) to shine this year.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter and the opportunities and features within. It is about you and for you, so we hope to hear from you throughout the year, and we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Have a wonderful year!

Sincerely,

Valerie G. Frank
FLEX Program Manager
American Councils

During the 2013-2014 school year, families in 590 communities and 650 schools across the United States hosted 802 FLEX students. During the 20+ years of the FLEX Program, from 1993-2014, more than 23,000 FLEX students have completed over 1,000,000 hours of community service while living in the United States.
Global New Media Lab (GNML)

GNML is administered by PH International and consists of two parts: GNML Online, and Youth TechCamp (YTC). During GNML Online students attend 10 online sessions about using social media from September-February. The YTC is a week-long workshop for approximately 26 selected FLEX, YES and A-SMYLE students who participated in GNML Online. YTC will be held in Vermont, March 23-27, 2015 and focuses on the process of effectively using social media to promote initiatives.

Civic Education Workshop (CEW)

CEW is administered by American Councils and the American Civics Center and will be held in Washington, D.C., for approximately 100 FLEX students and 15 A-SMYLE students. The program provides an opportunity for students to gain a better understanding of key concepts and values that are an integral part of U.S. society and culture. During CEW, students learn firsthand about the federal system of government and other important concepts through seminar discussions, briefings, and meetings on Capitol Hill. The FLEX and A-SMYLE CEW will take place March 15 – 21, 2015. Apply now at: https://ais.americancouncils.org/workshops

Workshop for Youth Leaders in Teaching of English (WYLTE)

WYLTE is administered by American Councils and will be held in Washington, D.C. for approximately 28 FLEX, YES and A-SMYLE students. Participants develop their abilities to teach English to other youth when they return home. Activities include extensive online pre-program engagement and follow-on support and interaction after the students return home. WYLTE will take place March 29 – April 4, 2015.
Mobility International, USA (MIUSA) welcomed 28 FLEX, YES and A-SMYLE students with disabilities from 14 countries to Eugene, Oregon for a workshop designed to help them set goals, learn about available resources and discover their own possibilities. The workshop was full of new and exciting discoveries as pictured here. In an impromptu sign language lesson, Erika (at left) supervises Valeria as she guides Batuhan’s hands to gesture in sign language - friends will always find a way to communicate! Later in the program students were the very definition of teamwork as they helped their peers climb high up into the trees as part of the ropes course. Students departed the workshop for their host families energized and full of plans for getting the most out of their year.
As you learned at your Pre-Departure Orientation, all FLEX students are expected to make presentations about their home country during International Education Week (IEW). This is a great opportunity for you to share the best of your country and home town with Americans who may be hearing about it for the first time.

IEW takes place November 17-21, 2014. For ideas about where and what to present, here are some reminders from pages 12-15 in your Introduction to the USA workbook:

- Lead a group of small children in typical games or activities that children in your country play.
- Write people’s names in your language, or teach them some useful and fun phrases.
- Demonstrate how to dance a traditional dance from your home country and give a lesson in the basic steps.

Announcing a FLEX photo contest!

The photo contest theme is “firsts.” Send us pictures of your “firsts” on program. This can be a new activity, a new food, or a new experience you’ve had since coming to the U.S.

Submit your photo, with an explanation of what is happening in it, to: https://flexprogram.submittable.com.

Deadline for submitting photos: December 12, 2014

Prize: The winning photo will become the “cover” image on the FLEX Program Facebook page for one month. Runners-up will also be featured on the page.
Round 1 is coming! Tell your friends to visit flex.americancouncils.org to find out how to apply for FLEX 2015-16!

“In just three weeks, Vlad has already become a wonderful addition to our family. He’s ‘big brother’ to my other two children, and has jumped right in meeting people in the community and getting involved.”
-Laurence, Host Father

“People are so kind school is amazing lessons are so interesting! I’m enjoying my life with my family! Some of my dreams came true!”
-Myrat (South Carolina)

“I understood that if you want to make friends just do not waste your time waiting for someone comes to you and asks about your hobbies! Be the person who starts conversation!”
-Kateryna (Massachusetts)