

## **STATEMENT ON EDUCATION COOPERATION**

On the occasion of President Barack Obama's November 2011 visit to Australia, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and Australian Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth Peter Garrett reaffirmed their commitment to U.S.-Australian engagement in education.

The Secretary and the Minister emphasized their shared commitment to promoting equal opportunity and valuing diversity in education so that all students can benefit from a high-quality education. They highlighted the need to enhance teaching in the area of science and technology, and stressed the critical importance of global competencies, such as world languages and intercultural skills, in order to be effective in an increasingly interconnected world economy.

The Secretary and the Minister:

- reaffirmed that the 2009 Agreement for Cooperation between the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the United States Department of Education (ED) serves as the principal framework agreement for U.S.-Australia cooperation in education.
- committed to the continued development of the U.S.-Australia Roundtable forum, designed as a forum for senior education officials and experts from both countries to engage in an in-depth policy dialogue about shared education reform priorities and challenges, and ways of addressing them within the context of a federal system of government.
- reviewed with satisfaction their recent participation in the 2nd U.S.-Australia Roundtable, held October 3-4 in Washington. The Roundtable covered such topics as improving teacher quality, promoting equal opportunity, supporting standards and assessment, and turning around low-performing schools.
- decided to hold the 3rd Roundtable in late 2012 in Australia, with a focus on capacity building with states, national assessments, and 21st Century skills.
- committed to further deepen bilateral exchange on education reform through the establishment of experts-level Policy Dialogues focused on specific topics of shared concern. The first, to be held in early 2012, will look at issues related to teacher quality. The second will focus on school improvement issues.
- expressed support for the expansion of virtual exchanges between schools in both countries, and in that regard commended the organizers of the virtual dialogue on sustainable green communities between Strathfield South High School (of New South Wales) and Thurgood Marshall Academy (of Washington, D.C.), held on November 15, as part of events related to International Education Week.
- welcomed the establishment by the U.S. Department of State and DEEWR of a Global Connections and Exchange program for Australia and the United States. The program will link up to seven schools in each country, with a special focus on those in remote areas, in a

collaborative program on environmental studies and science. The program will include training sessions, virtual workshops facilitated by experts, and collaborative work on an environmental issue that affects both the students' communities locally and has global implications.

- noted the continued success of the Australian-American Fulbright Program, and highlighted the recently launched Fulbright Scholarships in Renewable Energy and Climate Change Research, which support increased collaboration by U.S. and Australian scholars on renewable energy and climate change research. The Secretary and the Minister noted that more than 2600 Australians and 2000 American students and scholars have participated in the Fulbright Program since its inception in 1950.

- expressed support for the flourishing student exchanges between the United States and Australia, noting that approximately 10,000 American students are studying in Australia and approximately 3,800 Australian students are studying in the United States, and welcomed additional efforts to expand that further.

- remarked that the inclusion of school visits in the official programs for Prime Minister Gillard's United States visit of March 2011 and for President Obama's Australia visit of November 2011 reflected the growing importance of educational collaboration in the U.S.-Australia relationship.