Texas A&M University Response to 100,000 Strong Initiative

As a flagship research university, Texas A&M University recognizes its obligations to prepare its students and graduates for positions of global leadership in commerce and trade, education, cultural exchange, and diplomacy. Given China’s geopolitical and economic growth, the University proudly embraces a history of engagement with China, and is developing a campus response in the U.S. government’s 100,000 Strong Initiative, in order to increase the number of Texas A&M students with significant educational and professional experiences with China.

Background
Citing the strategic importance of the U.S.-China relationship, in November 2009, President Barack Obama announced the “100,000 Strong” initiative, a national effort designed to increase dramatically the number and diversify the composition of American students studying in China. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton officially launched the initiative in May 2010 in Beijing. The Chinese government strongly supports the initiative and has already committed 10,000 “Bridge Scholarships” for American students to study in China. This initiative seeks to prepare the next generation of American experts on China who will be charged with managing the growing political, economic and cultural ties between the United States and China. The initiative also seeks to develop specific opportunities and funding sources for underrepresented students to study in China.

The need for Americans to gain greater exposure to and understanding of China is clear: there is perhaps no more important or complex relationship in the world than that between the United States and China in terms of securing global peace and security. Virtually no major international issue—whether global economic recovery or climate change or nuclear non-proliferation can be solved without the active engagement of both the United States and China, working in concert.

Yet Americans have much to learn about China. Ten times more Chinese students come to the United States for educational programs than Americans who study in China, and 600 times more Chinese study the English language than Americans study Mandarin. At Texas A&M, in 2009 there were over 1,000 Chinese students studying at Texas A&M, over 20% of the total number of international students, while only 60 Texas A&M students participated in any form of Study Abroad programs in China. This imbalance in knowledge can undermine strategic trust between the two countries. Redressing this imbalance in knowledge is essential to ensuring that Americans have the cultural understanding and language skills that underpin effective diplomacy and foreign policy. It will also enhance our students’ ability to succeed academically and professionally in the global economy.

Texas A&M Baseline and Goals
Using the 2009-2010 numbers as a baseline for evaluation, Texas A&M currently sends approximately 60 students per year to China under official University or University-affiliated programs. Our goal is to double the number of students to participate in University programs in China to 120 over the next four years. In order to do this, we will strive to increase the number of students by approximately 30% yearly.

- 2010-2011: 78
- 2011-2012: 90
- 2012-2013: 103
- 2013-2014: 120

Proposed Programs & Activities:
In order to reach the target goal of 120 students, the following “types” of programs will be designed and offered to students:

1. Departmental and College level initiatives to increase opportunities for student exchange:
   a. Increase the number of faculty-led programs to China;
   b. Create “supervised direct enrollment” programs in collaboration with appropriate academic departments.
   c. Expand existing Reciprocal Exchange programs, and develop new REEP programs as appropriate.

2. Partner with U.S. and Chinese private sector entities to provide internship opportunities for students.
   a. Increase the number of scholarships offered by the Confucius Institute to study in China
   b. Develop additional scholarships for study in China