

2300 N Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20037
www.aspeninstitute.org

Tel. 202-736-5800 • Fax 202-467-0790

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Primary Contact: Maria Matteo
Queens College
maria.matteo@qc.cuny.edu

Primary Contact: Elizabeth Streich
LaGuardia Community College
estreich@lagcc.cuny.edu

Primary Contact: Ben Berliner
The Aspen Institute
Ben.Berliner@aspeninstitute.org

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State
ECA-Press@state.gov

**QUEENS COLLEGE PARTNERS WITH LA GUARDIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE ON
PROGRAM TO VIRTUALLY CONNECT YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD—FUNDED
BY STEVENS INITIATIVE**

Grantees will bring together thousands of young people from the United States and the Middle East and North Africa for an exciting opportunity to engage with global peers through virtual exchange.

Queens, New York, April 8, 2021 — Today, the Stevens Initiative [announced](#) its support of [Global Scholars Achieving Career Success](#) (GSACS), led by LaGuardia Community College in partnership with Borough of Manhattan Community College, Guttman Community College, Hostos Community College and Queens College, each of the City University of New York, and Abdelmalek Essaâdi University, Morocco, The American University in Cairo, Egypt, Jordan University of Science and Technology and Palestine Ahliya University, Palestinian Territories. LaGuardia Community College is one of 19 grantees to be named a 2021 Stevens Initiative grantee.

“People-to-people exchanges are critical to advancing global peace and understanding,” said Matthew Lussenhop, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. “Through early adoption of virtual exchanges, the Stevens Initiative has elevated technology to foster collaboration between students in the United States and counterparts in the Middle East and North Africa.”

In addition to developing relationships with their peers abroad, virtual exchange allows young people to build empathy, develop leadership skills, and learn about new topics. While participants have different experiences depending on their virtual exchange program, all are impacted in ways both big and small, including changes in career trajectory, a new interest in different cultures, lifelong friendships, and more.

Under the Stevens Initiative, Global Scholars Achieving Career Success (GSACS), implemented by LaGuardia Community College, is a collaborative multi-campus program that foregrounds UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and career readiness competencies in class-to-class virtual exchanges between students from the City University of New York and universities in the Middle East and North Africa. Participants collaborate on experiential learning projects that explore UN SDGs in relation to their local and international communities, present their work at a student-led conference, and engage in career development workshops that guide them to make connections between their GSACS experience and future career success. By developing their empathy, global knowledge, and sense of civic responsibility, GSACS prepares participants to serve their local and global communities in an interconnected world.

“For our students to be successful in today’s increasingly interconnected world, building their global competence and career readiness skills is vital,” said [LaGuardia Community College President Kenneth Adams](#). “Given current budget limitations, as well as travel restrictions necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, providing our students with the benefits of international exchange programs with the Middle East and North Africa, without leaving New York City is ideal. We are grateful to the Stevens Initiative for their support of this innovative virtual exchange project.”

“We thank the Stevens Initiative for giving our students a valuable opportunity to develop the professional skills and cultural understanding that will prepare them for the global marketplace,” says [Queens College President Frank H. Wu](#). “At a time when traditional exchange programs aren’t operating, Global Scholars Achieving Career Success (GSACS) enables our students to collaborate virtually with their peers in the Middle East and North Africa, and connects young people in those countries with Queens College’s talented and diverse student body.”

With these new grantees, the Stevens Initiative has funded 83 grants. Through these programs, the Stevens Initiative will expand its reach to nearly 75,000 young people in 17 MENA countries and the Palestinian Territories, and in 47 U.S. states, Puerto Rico, one tribal community, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Washington, D.C.

[Other grants](#) include:

- **AURAK’s Acknowledge – Challenge – Transform (ACT):** Developing Empathetic Leadership prepares college-aged youth in the United States and Middle East with

- the knowledge and skills required to acknowledge and challenge various forms of biases through empathy.
- **AMIDEAST's** Qisasna facilitates cross-cultural exchange between American and Yemeni students by providing participants with the skills needed to produce podcasts that focus on discussions of global issues, perceptions of both cultures, career opportunities for young people, and community service.
- **Culturingua's** Global Social Entrepreneurship Journey joins high school students in San Antonio, Texas, and in Benghazi, Libya, to develop a social enterprise idea that solves a United Nations Sustainable Development Goal.
- **Empatico's** Coding with Empathy Challenge, developed in partnership with Code.org, brings together middle school students from the United States and Egypt to collaborate on a series of empathy-building computer science and virtual exchange experiences.
- **Enactus Morocco and Enactus US's** Entrepreneurial Exchange helps university students and young adults gain entrepreneurship fundamentals through a virtual course that culminates in ten cross-country, cross-culture teams competing in a project pitch competition.
- **Engineering World Health's** Virtual Engineering Innovation & Cultural Exchange fosters an international collaboration between participants living in the United States, Lebanon, and Jordan with a focus on science, technology, math, and engineering (STEM).
- **Florida International University's** Tabadul: Creating Language-Learning Community Through Virtual Reality brings together college-aged youth in the United States and in the Middle East and North Africa for language-learning and community building through virtual reality.
- **Games for Change's** Game Exchange is a virtual exchange program for teens in the United States, Bahrain, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates in which teens from the four countries join in creative dialogue and collaboration based on a shared interest in video games and game design.
- **Global Ties U.S.'s** MENA-USA Empowering Resilient Girls Exchange (MERGE) brings together girls ages 15-19 from the United States and MENA region in a supportive virtual space to learn about their own mental health, develop emotional resilience skills, and share this knowledge with their communities.
- **Hashemite University's** Research, Education, and Advocacy for Community Health (REACH) brings together college-aged youth in the United States and in the Middle East for online, face-to-face learning experiences.
- **The International Foundation for Training and Development** and the **Onslow County School District's** Youth for Sustainable Development Goals Virtual

Exchange Program brings together and engages high school aged students, grades 9-12, to learn about the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), why they are important, and what these goals represent for students and their community.

- **The Institute of International Education's** Harnessing Innovation through Virtual Exchange for Enhanced Results (HIVER) program develops intercultural communication and problem-solving skills among diverse students at participating U.S. and MENA universities.
- **PATHWAYS Institute for Negotiation Education's** Game Changers in Education brings together undergraduate education students from the United States and Israel for real-time interactive joint learning and facilitated online exchange focused on developing and applying creative negotiation skills.
- **Seattle University School of Law's** Transitional Justice Legal Exchange brings together Moroccan and American law students for a class on transitional justice and human rights co-taught by professors from one Moroccan and one American institution.
- **Soliya's** Global Circles are short online dialogue opportunities, bringing together young people from various backgrounds and nationalities for a face-to-face exchange around compelling global issues that matter to youth today.
- **SUNY Upstate Medical University's** Bridging Cultures to Defeat COVID-19 is a virtual health sciences education program that brings together American, Middle Eastern, and North African clinical and scientific trainees for collaborative scientific and medical education and for unique professional development and cultural exchange opportunities.
- **The New York Academy of Sciences' Junior Academy** is a virtual exchange program bringing together a passionate community of problem solvers made up of talented students, STEM experts, and organizations around the world dedicated to designing innovative solutions to global challenges.
- **WorldDenver's** World Affairs Challenge is a virtual exchange program serving youth ages 14-17 in the state of Colorado and the MENA region through an online, mobile-accessible exchange in which bi-national student teams of six to ten participants learn and practice leadership development, cross-cultural communication, and project management.

“In our interconnected and diverse world, virtual exchange is a necessary tool that gives young people an appreciation for the world around them. The Stevens Initiative is proud to support these programs at a time when shared understanding and experiences among our next generation of leaders are more important than ever,” said Christine Shiau, Managing Director, the Stevens Initiative at the Aspen Institute.

The Stevens Initiative is an international effort to build global competence and

career readiness skills for young people in the United States and the Middle East and North Africa by growing and enhancing the field of virtual exchange. Created in 2015 as a lasting tribute to Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, the Initiative is committed to helping to expand the virtual exchange field through three pillars of work: investing in promising programs, sharing knowledge and resources, and advocating for virtual exchange adoption.

LaGuardia Community College, located in Long Island City, Queens, educates thousands of New Yorkers annually through degree, certificate, and continuing education programs. Founded nearly 50 years ago, in 1971, as part of the City University of New York (CUNY), its programs regularly become national models for pushing boundaries to give people of all backgrounds access to a high quality, affordable college education. Visit LaGuardia.edu.

Queens College enjoys a national reputation for its liberal arts and sciences and preprofessional programs. With its extensive range of graduate and undergraduate degrees, honors programs, research opportunities, and internship placements, the college serves more than 20,000 students, mentored by an award-winning faculty. Located on a beautiful 80-acre campus, the college has been cited for 28 consecutive years in the Princeton Review as a “Best Value” college.

The Global Scholars Achieving Career Success (GSACS) program is supported by the Stevens Initiative, which is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. Government, and is administered by the Aspen Institute. The Stevens Initiative is also supported by the Bezos Family Foundation and the governments of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates.

More Information

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us. Visit eca.state.gov.

The Aspen Institute is a global nonprofit organization committed to realizing a free, just, and equitable society. Founded in 1949, the Institute drives change through dialogue, leadership, and action to help solve the most important challenges facing the United States and the world. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute has a campus in Aspen, Colorado, and an international network of partners. For more information, visit www.aspeninstitute.org.

The Bezos Family Foundation supports rigorous, inspired learning environments for young people, from birth through high school, to put their education into action. Through investments in research, public awareness, systems building and programs, the foundation works to elevate the field of education and improve life outcomes for all children.

The Kingdom of Morocco has held a longstanding commitment to the promotion of peace, mutual understanding and respect across all fora. In line with this commitment, the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco is a strong supporter of the Stevens Initiative and is proud to be included in its programs, which foster opportunities for cross-cultural exchanges between youth.

The Embassy of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Washington, D.C. is committed to promoting and increasing cross-cultural understanding and educational exchanges. In line with the UAE Government's values, the Embassy supports educational programming at schools and universities across the U.S. The Embassy works with U.S. institutions to provide unique opportunities for peer-to-peer exchanges and help broaden student's horizons.



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