

U.S. Engagement in Chile: A Rich History of Academic Exchange

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U.S. universities present at a college fair in Chile for Chilean students hoping to study in the U.S./ U.S. Embassy Santiago, Chile/ [Flickr/ Creative Commons License](#)

In the last decade, new areas of cooperation have gained greater relevance in the joint agenda of Chile and the United States.¹ Among them, educational exchanges between the two countries stand out.² These exchanges have involved state entities, students, academics, private companies, and civil society organizations. Since the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Chile for Educational Cooperation signed in 1997, bilateral initiatives on issues related to education have multiplied.³ These initiatives have increased in their forms, goals, and target audience, as well as in the types of actors involved in their promotion. According to the annual census carried out by the Institute of International Education, between 1949 and 2020 there was an upward trend in the number of Chileans studying in the United States. Over 70 years, the number of students increased from 148 to 2,483. In the 2000s, 1,553 students from Chile studied in the U.S., and between 2009-2010 this number surpassed the 2,000 mark.⁴

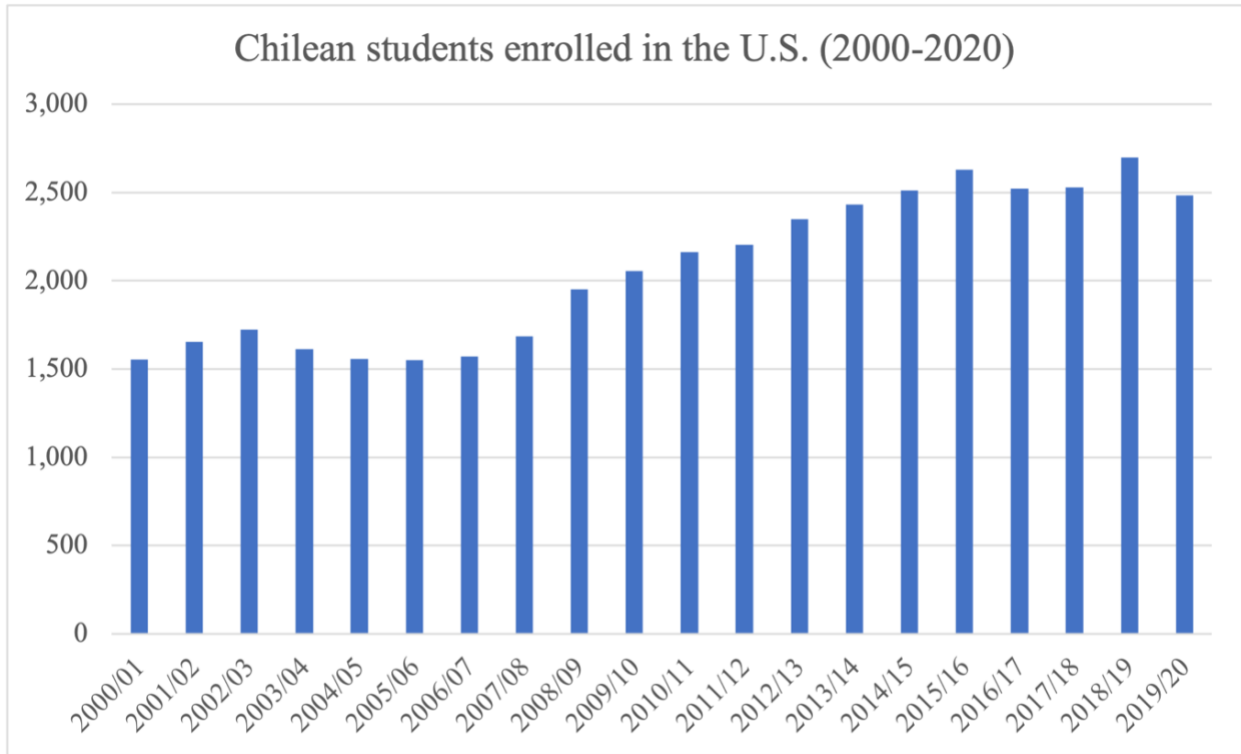


Figure 1. Institute of International Education. (2021). "International Student Totals by Place of Origin, 2000/01-2020/21." [Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange](#).

Fulbright Grants

In this context, one of the most traditional education cooperation programs is the Fulbright grant (1999- now), which has significantly diversified its action areas over time. These grants include different types of scholarships that offer Chilean men and women the opportunity to study at American universities.⁵ Among the scholarships, the “Igualdad de Oportunidades (BIO)” (Equal Opportunities) scholarship, established in 2007, stands out. This scholarship offers the opportunity for 100 students each year to pursue doctoral programs in more than 50 American universities through funding offered by the government of Chile.⁶ The Fulbright program also has three shorter exchange programs in the U.S.: the Hubert H. Humphrey Professional Development; the Study of the U.S. Institutes, and the Fulbright Chair.⁷

In line with the Chilean government's interest in improving the teaching and learning of English in its educational system,⁸ in 2014 new agreements were signed with Fulbright in order to promote the exchange of English teachers in Latin American universities. The Study of the U.S. Institutes for Scholars and Secondary Educators is focused on the specialization of Chilean teachers and school administrators in U.S. educational institutions, while the Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program consists of an internship aimed at Chilean high school level teachers, who attend seminars at a university in the United States and work in U.S. high schools.⁹

Regarding the financing of U.S. counterparts, between 2000 and 2010 there was an increase in the money granted by the United States Department of State, Fulbright Global Scholarships, and North American universities to the Fulbright programs. This amount increased from \$1,496,432 in 2000, to \$4,800,608 in 2010.¹⁰ As of 2010, this trend decreased, and in 2014 was down to \$2,856,661. In an interview, Paula Wikle, Cultural Affairs Officer of the U.S. Embassy in Chile, mentions that as of 2010, the Chilean government began to invest more resources in scholarships, thus becoming more autonomous. Indeed, between 2008-2017 the Chile National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT)'s annual budget tripled,¹¹ which could be related to the fall in Fulbright values. Wikle highlights the fact that among Latin Americans, most Fulbrighters to the United States are Chilean.¹²

The United States Government

In addition to the Fulbright projects, the United States government has supported the provision of scholarships and programs focused on secondary education for Chilean students and educators. Despite occupying a relatively high position among Latin American countries - Chile is the 4th country with the most English-speaking inhabitants - from a global perspective, there is still a long way to go, since it also occupies 42nd place in a ranking of 100 nations, according to EF Education First.¹³ In this area, the U.S. Embassy has also promoted initiatives for the teaching of English to outstanding students who are in economically unfavorable contexts, such as the English Access Microscholarship Program. The Embassy also has the Youth Ambassadors, a program that prepares Chilean adolescents in the areas of personal leadership and civic responsibility in their communities.¹⁴

The United States Embassy in Chile has also promoted the expansion of Binational Centers/Chilean North American Institutes and American Corners in Chile, which are present in different regions. The former are today in Antofagasta, La Serena, Santiago, Valparaíso, Curicó, Chillán, and Concepción. American Corners is established in Arica, Valdivia, Punta Arenas, Santiago, and Talca.¹⁵ In addition, in 2014 the Embassy supported the creation of the International Exchange Alumni Initiative which functions to maintain connections and disseminate new financing opportunities to participants and former beneficiaries of exchange programs promoted by the U.S. government.¹⁶ Also in 2014, the 100,000 Strong in the Americas program was inaugurated. Announced in 2011 by then U.S. President Barack Obama during a visit to Chile, "100,000" proposes the expansion of international student exchanges between Latin America, the Caribbean and the United States, through public-private collaboration. Thirteen universities located in six different regions of Chile¹⁷ have benefited so far. For all of the program contests won by Chileans, the Chilean universities participated in joint projects with U.S. institutions.¹⁸

The role of the Chilean government

Regarding subsidies financed by the Chilean government, between 1980-2020 the United States was the preferred foreign destination for scholarship recipients from the Chilean National Agency for Research and Development (ANID)'s different programs, totaling 3,909 students.¹⁹ Of these, 2,325 were beneficiaries of Becas Chile.²⁰ Another aspect of the Chile-U.S. bilateral relationship in higher education is the number of agreements between universities of both nations. Currently, the top five Chilean universities in the QS World University Rankings²¹ have a total of approximately 186 agreements with universities in the United States.²²

In 2013 and 2014, the Chile National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT) carried out Brain Chile, a survey of information on doctors residing in Chile and other nations during this period. In 2014, of the total of Chilean doctors who lived outside the country, 22% had received their degree in the United States, the U.S. being the main foreign destination for Chilean graduates. Among the doctors residing in Chile during this same period, 11% of graduates from foreign universities obtained their degree from U.S. institutions, an index only below the percentage of graduates from Spanish institutions (15%).²³

In 2012 and 2013, CONICYT allocated funds for the development of Chile-U.S. research projects with limited budgets of 50 million pesos per year and a maximum of 3 years in length. In its first edition, 6 projects were approved in the areas of Antiseismic Engineering, Ecology and Biodiversity, and Oceanography.²⁴ In the following year, 13 projects were awarded. The National Sciences Foundation acted as counterpart for five of the projects, and the State of Massachusetts supported the rest.²⁵

The Role of the Private Sector: The Luksic Scholars Foundation and American Universities

Outside of the public sector, the work of the Luksic Scholars Foundation stands out, linked to the business consortium of the same name. The Foundation was established in mid-2020, with the aim of grouping and managing the portfolio of programs and offices developed by the Luksic family since 2000. Between 2000 and 2020, the Foundation executed approximately 25 study programs (postgraduate studies, academic fellowships, and exchanges) of which 14 included universities in the U.S., including renowned institutions such as Harvard, Stanford, Notre Dame, Boston College, and Columbia.²⁶ In addition, Chile has offices of such relevant American universities as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT Sloan), Harvard University (Harvard DRCLAS), Columbia University (Global Centers - Santiago). Luksic Scholars additionally supports the office of Tsinghua University, China. Specifically, MIT Sloan in Santiago is the only international office of this institution, and it came about through the initiative of businessman Andrónico Lukšić.²⁷

Chile California Council and the Chile-Mass Strategic Plan

One of the main purposes of the Chile California Strategic Plan since its inception in 2008 has been the formation of advanced human capital.²⁸ In order to achieve this objective, the Chile California Council (CCC) has built bridges between different Chilean and American stakeholders interested in fostering exchanges for students and researchers. These exchanges were particularly intense between 2012-2015, benefiting researchers and students from institutions in both countries, especially for the University of California-Davis (UC Davis). In 2018, UC Davis held 10 active cooperative agreements with different Chilean higher education institutions and received about 55 academics and students from Chile annually. In addition, more than 60 UC Davis professors had academic ties in Chile through this period.²⁹

Between 2012-2013, the Council highlighted four exchange projects in its annual reports.³⁰ The first consisted of a pilot sabbatical exchange program for university professors between Chile and California. The second was the organization of two academic workshops, one at Stanford University and the other at UC Berkeley focused on the participation of Chilean students studying in California. This was funded at the time by Becas Chile. Third, CCC promoted the Dreaming Chile from California contest, whose 64 participants competed by submitting innovative ideas. There is no evidence that these three programs later expanded beyond these activities.

The fourth initiative carried out in the aforementioned years was the signing of an agreement with the “Prácticas para Chile” (Internships for Chile) program.³¹ This program allowed for students from Stanford, UC Berkeley, UC Davis, and other universities in the United States to intern at Chilean public institutions, such as the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Social Development.³² In 2013, the Chile California Plan stimulated the creation of the UC Berkeley-Chile Seed Grant Competition, which resulted in the financing of 11 collaborative projects by professors from Chile and California through the UC Berkeley Center for Latin American Studies (UC Berkeley CLAS) and the Chile National Commission for Scientific and Technological Research (CONICYT). In 2014 there was a second edition of the contest, in which 8 groups of researchers from institutions in both countries participated.³³ The main areas covered by these collaborative scientific projects are geothermal energy, stem cells, wave energy, physics, public health, and biodiversity.

In early 2014, the Chile California Council coordinated for the young Chilean winners of the national “Aprendo Emprendo” contest to visit Facebook, Tesla Motors, and Baywood and Padlet.³⁴ The same year, the CCC reported on its collaborations with delegations from the Universidad Católica de Chile (UC), the Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, and the Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez to create training programs in Silicon Valley. In 2015 this same location was inaugurated as a UC engineering office.³⁵ Also in 2015, the UC Davis Chile Life Sciences Innovation Center opened its International Research Center in Chile, focused on “plant breeding, post-harvest technology, climate change technologies, and viticulture and enology.”³⁶ Finally, in

July 2014, the Chile California Council launched their “The Bridge” program which enables engineering students from Chilean institutions to carry out part of their studies and internships in Silicon Valley.³⁷

Different from the Chile California Council, Chile-Mass has focused primarily on helping Chilean companies reach Massachusetts, and for U.S. technology to reach Chile.³⁸ However, when Fernanda Soza took over as executive director of Chile Mass in 2018, she proposed adding an educational guideline focused on teaching English to the agenda, which was well received.³⁹ The result was a pilot launch of the Chile-Mass Teachers Program.⁴⁰ After positive feedback from this pilot, Chile-Mass Teachers signed an agreement with Framingham State University (FSU) for the 2021 version of the educational program.⁴¹

In short, the area of education has been fertile ground in the recent history of the Chile-United States bilateral relationship. Along with issues related to the environment, technology, and energy, the education sector constitutes what is known as the “new agenda” for cooperation between the nations.⁴² The impact of U.S. commitment to education is a significant increase in programs sponsored by the public and private sectors of both countries. The United States is a large recipient of Chilean students and educators. Furthermore, as Felipe Agüero, Professor at the University of Chile and Doctor in Political Science (Duke University) points out, the United States has also been interested in sending American students and researchers to Chile. Not only does this encourage internationalization of the former, but it also supports the field work of the latter.⁴³

Endnotes

¹ Fuentes, Claudia, and Francisco Rojas Aravena. 2016. "Chile and the United States: A Cooperative Friendship." In *Contemporary U.S.-Latin American Relations. Cooperation or Conflict in the 21st Century?*, eds. Jorge I. Domínguez and Rafael Fernández de Castro. New York: Routledge, 128–50.

² In addition to education, Fuentes and Rojas Aravena (2016) identify technology, the environment and energy as new areas that have acquired a growing role in the last decade.

³ U.S. Department of State. Accedido el 27 de Julio de 2021. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/12837-Chile-Education-Misc-Agreement-2.26.1997.pdf>.

⁴ Institute of International Education. (2020). "International Students by Place of Origin, Selected Years, 1949/50 - 2019/20." Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <https://opendoorsdata.org/>.

⁵ Among them we can mention the Master's Scholarship and Master's for Education Professionals; Doctoral Scholarship, Equal Opportunities Scholarship, Faculty Development Scholarship, Science and Technology Scholarship, Fulbright-MECESUP Docotral Scholarship, Pre-Doctoral Scholarship and Academic Residence.

⁶ Fuentes and Rojas Aravena, "Chile and the United States: A Cooperative Friendship."

⁷ Fulbright Chile. "Becas." Accessed July 27, 2021.

⁸ Fuentes and Rojas Aravena, "Chile and the United States: A Cooperative Friendship."

⁹ Embajada de los Estados Unidos en Chile. "Programa Fulbright TEA (Teaching Excellence and Achievement)." Accessed July 27, 2021. <https://cl.usembassy.gov/es/programa-fulbright-tea-teaching-excellence-and-achievement/>.

¹⁰ Fulbright Chile. "Publicaciones." Accessed July 27, 2021. <http://www.fulbright.cl/multimedia/publicaciones/>.

¹¹ CONICYT 2017. Accessed September 4, 2021. <https://www.conicyt.cl/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/COMPENDIO-ESTADISTICO-AN%CC%83O-REFERENCIA-2017.pdf>.

¹² Paula Wikle during an interview for the project "Assessing the Cumulative Effects of US Engagement in Uruguay and Chile". July 30, 2021.

¹³ CNN Chile 2019. Accessed September 4, 2021. https://www.cnnchile.com/mundo/chile-mas-hablantes-no-nativos-ingles-estudio-education-first_20191206/.

¹⁴ U.S. Embassy in Chile. "Programa Jóvenes Embajadores de Chile." Accessed July 27, 2021. <https://cl.usembassy.gov/es/youth-ambassadors-program-chile-es/>.

¹⁵ U.S. Embassy in Chile. "American Spaces." Accessed July 27, 2021. <https://cl.usembassy.gov/es/education-culture-es/american-spaces-es/>.

¹⁶ State Alumni Chile. "Red de Becarios State Alumni Chile." Accessed July 27, 2021. <https://statealumni.cl/sobre-sach/#PROGRAMAS>.

¹⁷ Universidad de Aysén (Aysén); Universidad de Concepción, Universidad del Bío-Bío and Universidad del Desarrollo (Bío-Bío); Universidad Austral de Chile (Los Ríos); Instituto de Ecología y Biodiversidad and Universidad de Magallanes (Magallanes); Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Universidad de los Andes and Universidad Mayor (Santiago); Instituto Profesional Duoc UC and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso (Valparaíso).

¹⁸ 100,000 Strong in The Americas. "Chile." Accessed July 27, 2021. <https://www.100kstrongamericas.org/tag/chile/>.

¹⁹ Programs include: Becas Conicyt, Becas Chile, BPR International and National, and Conicyt International. Amongst them, The US was the preferred destination for BPR International and Conicyt International scholarship recipients. In the other programs, the United States was the second most chosen country by the beneficiaries. Agencia Nacional de Investigación y Desarrollo (ANID). "Becarios(as) Subdirección de Capital Humano." Accessed July 27, 2021. <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDc3NjJlZGQ0ZTM5Zi00NWQxLTljMDQtNmJlOWM4MzgzMDE3IiwidCI6ImU3M2FmMWRILWU5ZTYtNGMOOS1iMlUxLWZjNjg3ZjM2MjY0NyIsImMiOiR9>.

²⁰ Becas Conicyt. "Panel Interactivo: Becarios Programa Formación de Capital Humano Avanzado." Accessed September 23, 2021. <https://www.conicyt.cl/becasconicyt/estadisticas/ejecucion-presupuestaria/>.

²¹ The universities are: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Universidad de Chile, Universidad Adolfo Ibañez, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, and Universidad de Concepción. QS World University Rankings. "QS World

University Rankings® 2021.” Accessed March 20, 2021. <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2021>.

²² Agreements and partnerships disclosed on the university’s webpages were considered.

²³ <https://www.conicyt.cl/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/PRESENTACION%20ESTUDIO-BRAIN-EXCHANGE.pdf>.

²⁴ <https://www.conicyt.cl/pci/files/2012/10/REX5664-Concurso-Chile-EEUU.pdf>.

²⁵ <https://www.conicyt.cl/pci/files/2013/04/PROYECTOS-ADJUDICADOS-USA-2013.pdf>.

²⁶ Fundación Luksic Scholars. “Programas.” March 20, 2021. <https://www.luksicscholars.org/programas/>.

²⁷ The Lukšić family was also listed as the financial support of the first Harvard office in Chile. Peter Morse, president Luksic Scholars Foundation during an interview for the project “Assessing the Cumulative Effects of US Engagement in Uruguay and Chile.” September 14, 2021.

²⁸ Between 2008 and 2013, more than 200 Chilean students had completed their bachelor’s at UC Berkeley. <https://www.amchamchile.cl/2013/05/chile-y-california-socios-para-la-prosperidad/>.

²⁹ These links have resulted between 2010-2018 in more than 750 co-authored publications. <https://globalaffairs.ucdavis.edu/news/uc-davis-pontificia-universidad-catolica-chile-renew-agreement>.

³⁰ https://chile-california.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AR2012-13_compressed.pdf.

³¹ The *Prácticas para Chile* program was created in 2011 under the government of President Sebastián Piñera.

³² In 2013, the Catholic University reported that seven students from Stanford and Chicago universities participated in the exchange to Chile through this program. However, there is no record of numbers of participants from previous and subsequent editions on the *Prácticas para Chile* official page. <http://derecho.uc.cl/en/noticias/9649-alumnos-extranjeros-del-programa-practicas-para-chile-visitaron-nuestra-facultad>.

³³ <https://clas.berkeley.edu/publications/conicyt-chile-california-impact-wildland-fires>.

³⁴ https://chile-california.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AR2014_compressed.pdf.

³⁵ <https://www.ing.uc.cl/noticias/se-inaugura-oficina-de-ingenieria-uc-en-silicon-valley/>.

³⁶ https://chile-california.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AR2015_compressed.pdf.

³⁷ https://chile-california.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/AR2014_compressed.pdf.

³⁸ Lovell “Tu” Jarvis was Executive Director, UC Davis Chile Center (*Life Sciences Innovation Center*) in Santiago. Chile California Council former president. August 30, 2021.

³⁹ Fernanda Soza, Executive Director Chile-Mass. July 29, 2021.

⁴⁰ The two professors who came to Boston through this program in early 2020 were funded by Agrosuper and the Luksic Scholars Foundation.

⁴¹ https://mcusercontent.com/64ae2ad0e7f773d2d24f79410/files/f688d450-164b-3102-fba4-268dee8e3a63/ChileMass_Annual_Report_2020.pdf.

⁴² Fuentes and Rojas Aravena, “Chile and the United States: A Cooperative Friendship.”

⁴³ Felipe Agüero during an interview for the project “Assessing the Cumulative Effects of US Engagement in Uruguay and Chile.” July 22, 2021.

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