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Advocacy Corner - v9

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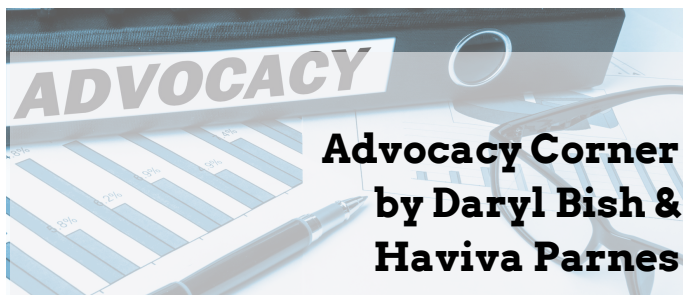
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The Advocacy Corner in the Fall 2022 edition of the EnglishUSA Journal spoke to the lack of English Language Program (ELP) data and how more detailed, field-specific information could support advocacy efforts. Well, what a difference a year can make. Thanks to the collective efforts of EnglishUSA, Bonard, the Institute of International Education (IIE), and the Departments of Commerce, State, and Homeland Security, we now have more data on the U.S. ELP-field than has ever been available before.

In July 2023, EnglishUSA released the first ever Annual Report for English Language Programs in the USA. Prior to the report, there was no nationwide data on the U.S. ELP market collected by the industry itself. EnglishUSA initiated the report after receiving the Department of Commerce Market Development Cooperator Program (MDCP) award in 2022. EnglishUSA partnered with Bonard, a leading provider of global international education data and research, to map the ELP-sector in the US by collecting detailed industry data in an annual survey looking at enrollments by age group, student source, course type, visa type, and more. 289 English language programs of all types participated in the inaugural survey allowing the report to paint a comprehensive picture of the U.S. ELP field in 2022. Going forward, future editions of the report will include historical comparisons to help identify emerging trends. EnglishUSA also hopes for an increase in participation so the data can provide an even more accurate portrayal of US ELPs going forward.

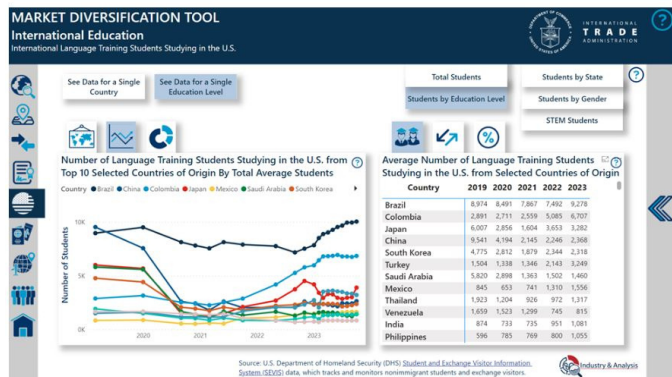
The EnglishUSA Annual Report for ELPs in the U.S. is a significant step forward for the field with a goal to help individual programs, support services, and EnglishUSA in making strategic decisions. Yet, it was not the only new market data released in 2023. The U.S. International Trade Administration (ITA) in the Department of Commerce launched a new Market Diversification Tool for International Education at the EnglishUSA Stakeholders' Conference in October, bringing together a range of industry data into one dashboard. International education was included in the ITA's National Export Strategy for the first time in 2023, meaning that the Department of Commerce will provide more coordinated promotion of the U.S. as a study destination. The Market Diversification Tool for International Education has been designed to "help institutions exporting education services to explore and compare potential markets and focus their recruitment efforts," according to the ITA. The new tool brings together various datasets, including export data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis; active international student data from the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS); student visa type statistics from the Department of Homeland Security; and global student mobility data from UNESCO. For the first time, the various datasets are collected into one comprehensive, interactive dashboard which has the potential to help programs make informed decisions about



BONARD



recruiting and market development using the most current data available. The tool allows you, for example, to see the top countries sending language training students (i.e. ELP students) for the past five years, including 2023 data.



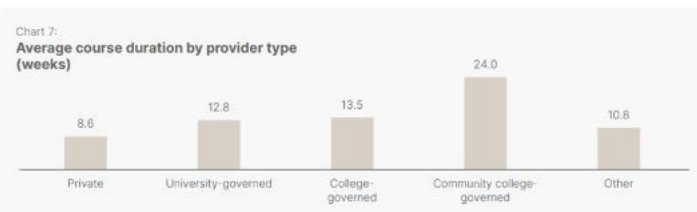
Source: International Trade Administration (ITA) in the Department of Commerce launched a new Market Diversification Tool for International Education

Collectively, the ITA Market Diversification Tool, the EnglishUSA annual report on U.S. ELPs, and the always valuable [IIE Open Doors data portal for intensive English programs](#) provide insightful information about the U.S. ELP field, looking at program types, enrollments by country, age and visa type, as well as detailed source market information. Such data better allow U.S. ELPs to analyze enrollment trends and focus marketing and recruitment strategies on national, regional, and local levels, but how will this new wealth of data inform and impact national advocacy efforts?

One of EnglishUSA's goals is to promote and advocate for English language study in the U.S. at the wide variety of program types offered across the country, including proprietary programs, university and college-governed programs, pathway programs, and community college ELPs. EnglishUSA's national advocacy efforts have always emphasized ELPs' role in helping students achieve their academic, professional, and personal goals. All of the [advocacy statements](#) issued by EnglishUSA,

jointly or individually, since 2017 speak to the diverse reasons students elect to study English in the U.S., but usually the first benefit listed and the one that is emphasized most is that ELPs serve as an access point into the U.S. higher education system. This, perhaps, reflects how ELPs are most commonly perceived by the larger U.S. international education field: a step toward or pathway to degree program enrollment. While that role is absolutely important, the data shows that it is not why most students are coming to study English in the U.S.

[IIE data shows](#) that in 2022 only 27% of intensive English program (IEP) students intend to study at additional institutions after their English study. The inaugural EnglishUSA report reflects this by identifying that 66% of ELP students in 2022 enrolled in private programs, while 30% enrolled in university, college, or community college-based ones. The report shows that the majority of U.S. ELP students are selecting short-term study at proprietary programs, where the average course duration in 2022 was 8.6 weeks.



Source: EnglishUSA Annual Report for English Language Programs in the USA, 2023

Short-term, general, intensive English study is the number one reason why students are attending ELPs in the U.S. Most of these students do not intend to transfer to U.S. undergraduate or graduate programs. They are studying English for personal or professional reasons, often while on winter or summer vacation or during gap years before pursuing a university degree in their home country. EnglishUSA, as the recognized voice of U.S. ELPs, can better emphasize, support,

and promote short-term English study in advocacy efforts. This could mean advocating for the Department of Homeland Security to explicitly allow certain, limited educational activities, like English language training, in B-1/B-2 and other nonimmigrant statuses. This is a common practice in other global English Language Training (ELT) markets. The United Kingdom, for example, allows everyone to study for up to six months as a visitor. Such a change could make the U.S. a more attractive destination in the global ELT market by reducing regulatory or financial barriers to short term study, like obtaining the F-1 student visa just to study in a 4-week intensive English program.

Advocating for such change would require more research and collective agreement from the field, but the data shows that short-term English study is in demand globally and, as an association, EnglishUSA should consider starting this conversation. In order to better compete for English language students with the UK, Canada and Australia, where this short term study as a visitor is recognized, the US needs to consider more flexible options for students. This can include allowing for dual intent or even study full time without a student visa. Not every student who comes to study has intentions for higher education, however, the U.S. student visa process caters to the student who is obtaining a degree in higher education, which translates into higher rates of visa denials for English language training students. The F-1 visa process is also expensive. All of this causes the US to be a less attractive destination for short-term English study.

The U.S. should adopt regulations and practices that support the variety of paths students use to study English here. The EnglishUSA annual report identified that English language students use a variety of routes to enter the U.S., with 62% using the F-1 visa in 2022. The remaining 38% of students are using other ways to be in the country that



reflect the complexity of the international English study student body in the U.S.

These students are tourists on the B visa or ESTA visa waiver looking for short term study/travel. Or they are in the U.S on other visa types, like the J, R, or F-2 visas. They are U.S. citizens, residents, refugees, and asylees. Most of these students enroll in U.S. ELPs to learn English so they can better engage with their local community and promote global citizenry or they want to improve their English proficiency to help their lives in their home country. The motivations are diverse and advocacy efforts for U.S. ELPs should better reflect all the diverse reasons why students enroll. This is not to diminish university or college preparation which is an important service provided by U.S ELPs. Providing short-term study/travel opportunities and having English classes that support and benefit local communities and increase US tourism are also important.

We at EnglishUSA appreciate your support and encourage you to continue to advocate for your students and programs. Please share your thoughts and questions about any of the above topics on EnglishUSA's Engage Members Forum.

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Haviva Parnes is the PDSO and US Head of Operations for EC English Language Centers.

Haviva started her career in English Language Learning over 20 years ago after receiving her TEFL certification and teaching in China and has been working in both academic and operational functions in proprietary schools since. Haviva is currently the Past-President for EnglishUSA and is Co-Chair of the Advocacy and External Relations Committee.

