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Media Note

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The WEST (Work, English Study, Travel) Program

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan of the Republic of Korea signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the WEST (Work, English Study, Travel) Program and expansion of other reciprocal exchange opportunities on September 22 in New York. During their most recent summit in August 2008, President George W. Bush and President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea discussed plans to create new bilateral opportunities for young Americans and Koreans to learn about each other's country by working, studying, and traveling abroad. The WEST Memorandum of Understanding is the result.

The WEST program is an innovative exchange program that will allow up to 5,000 qualifying university students and recent university graduates from the Republic of Korea to enter the United States for a period of 18 months on J-1 exchange visitor visas that will allow them to study English, participate in internships, and travel independently. Participants will devote at least 450 classroom hours to structured English language training and coursework focusing on American business practices and business procedures, U.S. corporate culture, and general office management issues. The program will be coordinated by the private sector under the auspices of the United States Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. This program will be launched in 2009.

The Government of the Republic of Korea intends to establish an eighteen-month Working Holiday Program (WHP) under which participants from the United States can pursue work, study, and travel opportunities in Korea.

The WEST program and its governing Memorandum of Understanding reflects the future-oriented nature of the U.S. – Korea alliance by providing students from the United States and the Republic of Korea with a unique opportunity to develop foreign language skills while gaining professional experience in the international work place. This program will enable the American and Korean people to share their values while increasing their international understanding. As President Bush said in Seoul, "I believe the best foreign policy for America is for people to get to know our country firsthand."

Authority for the Exchange Visitor Program derives from the [Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961](#), also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of this act is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through educational and cultural exchanges.

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