
AIPES

19th Annual Graduation Ceremony for the American Institute on Political and Economic Systems

Mister President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to be here at the commencement ceremony of the American Institute on Political and Economic Systems, organised jointly by Charles University with the Fund for American Studies and Georgetown.

It is now nineteen years since we were first approached by our two partners about the possibility of creating the joint summer institute, which has come to be known as AIPES. At the time, I think none of us was entirely sure about the viability of the project. Time has shown, however, that it was an idea ripe for the sowing, for the institute has gradually come to be one of our most highly regarded summer programmes. Indeed, the growth of the program since 1993 has been a great success story.

In the first year of its existence the American Institute on Political and Economic Studies had just 35 students. This year 125 students are attending from 30 different countries, and over the last nineteen years it has hosted a total of 2100 students from a total of 36 countries. Likewise, as the program's reputation has grown, so has the number of applicants.

In the current school year, more than 450 students applied to the Fund for American Studies' various international programmes, 200 of them exclusively to AIPES.

Since 2004, AIPES has been supplemented by The European Journalism Institute, a programme that concentrates on another of the subject areas that were severely neglected and compromised under the Communist regime, and we are happy to be able to make this small contribution to its rehabilitation. Thirty students attended the programme this year. Bringing students from other countries to Prague has long been an important objective of Charles University, and it is pleasing that these two institutes make their own contribution to this process. The development of academic ties between the oldest university in Central Europe and one of the oldest universities in the United States also provides us with many unique academic opportunities.

For example, we are pleased to have three of our students from Charles University go to Georgetown University each summer to study and participate in the Institutes sponsored by The Fund for American Studies. These students gain valuable experience in the fields of politics, journalism, and business. When they return to Charles University they share what they have learned with their colleagues, thus enhancing discourse on important topics.

In closing, let me say that I am delighted we have been able to welcome so many talented young people at Charles University during the nineteen years of our association with the Fund for American Studies. I hope that this year's students have had just as exciting and productive a time as their predecessors, and I wish them all great success in their future careers.