TENSC A&M AGRIlI FE AND COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY RECEIVES STEVENS INITIATIVE GRANT TO MAKE VIRTUAL EXCHANGE POSSIBLE FOR YOUTH IN MOROCCO AND THE UNITED STATES

Grantees will provide young people from Morocco and the United States the opportunity to connect through virtual exchange for cross cultural learning and skills-building.

College Station, August 13, 2020 — The Stevens Initiative announced today that School of Agriculture, Fertilization and Environmental Sciences (ESAFE), Mohammed VI Polytechnic University and Texas A&M AgriLife and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University is one of four new partnerships that will receive funding to implement virtual exchange programs that provide young people global education opportunities. The Initiative is committed to expanding the virtual exchange field by investing in promising programs, and this partnership is part of a strategic effort by the Stevens Initiative to encourage the adoption of virtual exchange throughout Morocco.

The Kingdom of Morocco prioritizes education and training as an essential tool for economic development that prepares young people to enter the workforce. This moment is an ideal time to integrate virtual exchange into schools and institutions across Morocco, giving young people the opportunity to develop global competencies and career-readiness skills. The Initiative is confident that these new programs will play a valuable role in this effort.

“As a founding partner of the Stevens Initiative, the Kingdom of Morocco has demonstrated a continued interest in providing young people across Morocco opportunities to build important skills through virtual exchange. It is with excitement that we launch these virtual exchange partnerships to connect young people from Morocco with their

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peers across the United States. Together, they will learn about one another and develop the skills and mindsets that take our nations forward in an interconnected world,” said Mohamed Abdel-Kader, Executive Director, the Stevens Initiative at the Aspen Institute.

Under the Stevens Initiative, School of Agriculture, Fertilization and Environmental Sciences (ESAFE), Mohammed VI Polytechnic University and Texas A&M AgriLife and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Texas A&M University’s ENGAGE: Leadership in a Virtual World is a collaborative seven-week virtual exchange program that introduces students to international intercultural competencies through a variety of group assignments with agricultural and non-agricultural leadership themes. ENGAGE immerses both graduate and undergraduate students in a virtual environment of diverse teamwork, active listening, conflict management, leadership/followership, critical thinking, problem solving, and effective communication through positive dialogue. Through these facilitated dialogues and intentional activities, students develop critical skills that are relevant in today’s global workforce.

“This virtual student exchange provides an opportunity for Texas A&M students to meet African students, learn about their lives, and develop cultural competency skills that are needed in today’s job market,” said Dr. Jack Elliot, Regional Director for Africa, Norman Borlaug Institute for International Agriculture and Development at Texas A&M University.

Through these grants, 1,400 young people from Morocco and 19 U.S. states will engage in virtual exchange, making meaningful intercultural connections and developing important skills. These grants were developed through the Initiative’s Design with a Partner pathway.

Other grants include:

- **Enactus Morocco** and **Enactus U.S.** Enactus Entrepreneurial Exchange engages university students through a four-week virtual and online entrepreneurship fundamentals course that culminates in a project pitch competition and the award of global entrepreneurship certificates.

- **Hassan II University of Casablanca** and **Kennesaw State University’s** Women’s Leadership Virtual Exchange engages students from both universities in a unique cross-cultural virtual exchange experience focused on better understanding women’s leadership through research, analysis, and digital storytelling.

- **Lydex** and **ASU Prep Digital’s** Global Leadership Virtual Exchange provides students in Morocco and the United States a chance to work together via an online exchange course to gain collaboration, cross-cultural, and leadership skills.

In addition to the grants above, the Initiative is partnering with additional institutions through Stevens Initiative Connected Classrooms. The Stevens Initiative supports the participation of Mohamed VI International Academy for Civil Aviation and Cadi Ayyad University Higher School of Technology of Essaouira in East Carolina University’s Global Understanding Program.
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.

The Stevens Initiative is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, with funding provided by the U.S. Government, and is administered by the Aspen Institute. It 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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