

Transcript- Go Global ED Podcast: Episode 1 – Cheryl Gibbs, Senior Director, International and Foreign Language Education (IFLE), Office of Postsecondary Education, U.S. Department of Education

[Intro/Matt] Welcome to the Go Global ED Podcast brought to you by the International and Foreign Language Education Office also known as IFLE at U.S. Department of Education. On the Go Global ED Podcast we speak with IFLE grant and fellowship recipients to highlight their experiences, discuss issues in international and foreign language education, share advice on the application process, and explore the long term value and impact of IFLE programs.

[Amy] Thanks for tuning into the inaugural episode of the Go Global ED Podcast, brought to you by the IFLE Division at the U.S. Department of Education. My name is Amy Marrion and I'm joined by my colleague Matt Robinson. Today we're talking to Cheryl Gibbs, Senior Director of the International and Foreign Language Education Division here at U.S. Department of Education. Welcome to the podcast, Cheryl.

[Cheryl] Thank you, Amy it's a pleasure to join you.

[Amy] Thanks so much for joining us. So, we have a couple of questions for you. It is International Education Week and as part of that we are unveiling this brand-new podcast and we've spoken to a lot of IFLE grantees and fellows and we'll be hearing their stories later this week. We talked about their experiences on our programs and themes like lifelong learning, internationalizing US campuses and schools, and diversity equity and inclusion, all sorts of themes came up. So, one of our first questions for you is, what does international education mean to you?

[Cheryl] Amy, international education to me, means preparing the United States of America, the institutions, the communities, are students to be globally competent. That is a huge mission, but the Department of Education has historically, through its title VI programs and the Fulbright-Hays program, really seized the moment and taken this mission very seriously. And we pride ourselves in being able to award to administer grant programs and to award grants that really move the needle on the U.S. competitive edge. And international education is not only a program it's all about the person's development and individuals development the capacity of an institution to respond to world issues and to crises. It's the capacity to train young people to think with diverse perspectives, to really broaden their own horizons and to be able to sit at the U.S. Department of Education and in the position that I have, I feel extremely fortunate to be able to be a part of that mission. To be a part of that effort to touch thousands of institutions and countless numbers of students over the 20+, 30+ plus years of working with these programs and it's a noble effort. We learn everyday as a unit we learn every day as leaders and program officers how best to further this mission.

[Amy] Thank you, Cheryl. I totally agree and I'm also really thrilled to be working on the work that we're doing here at the Department of Education and the personal growth I agree is so important and there's so many opportunities for folks to pursue.

[Matt] So in addition to being international Education Week here at IFLE, we're celebrating another milestone which is the 60th Anniversary of Fulbright-Hays. Cheryl, given your distinguished career at the Department of Education, could you share any reflections on the Fulbright-Hays programs and their impact?

[Cheryl] I can. Admittedly, my experience prior to moving into senior leadership was mainly on the title VI side but over the past several years I've had the opportunity to engage with Gary Thomas and the staff that administer the Fulbright-Hays programs and in that relationship, I am really impressed with the extent to which these programs touch individuals, either through the Seminars Abroad Program or the Group Projects Abroad Program definitely the Doctoral Dissertation Research Program. And prior to maybe ten years ago, we had a very robust Faculty Research Abroad Program where faculty came back and told us that they were able to further their teaching agenda and be better faculty and professors on various campuses because of the experience that they had. To the faculty research abroad program, as a former teacher myself, I really can resonate with the importance and the impact of the Seminars Abroad Program, there are teachers and countless schools and school districts across America who do not get to experience places beyond their own states or cities let alone having an opportunity to study abroad and to network with other peers abroad and foreign cultures and so the impact of that program is just really significant and so collectively in celebrating the 60 plus years of Fulbright-Hays, I'm really proud of the accomplishments under that program because they do complement the Title VI program and it complements the mission of the United States and the Department of Education to prepare students and to provide equal access to individuals so they can become globally competitive

[Amy] thanks for that Cheryl. So related to that, we actually had some exciting news earlier this year a Secretary Cardona, here at the Department of Education, along with Secretary Blinken at the Department of State, released a new Joint Statement of Principles and Support of International Education so some of the themes in the Joint Statement, which I think is the first one in about 20 years, so it's really exciting, some of the themes include benefiting American students and communities strengthening US higher education and supporting research and innovation so given the Joint Statement, what can you tell us about opportunities in international education provided by IFLE? So far we've talked a little bit about the Fulbright-Hays programs and I know you spent quite a bit of time working on the Title VI domestic programs, is there more you'd like to add about IFLE's programs and how they contribute to the renewed commitment to international education and the joint statement?

[Cheryl] Yes. I'd like to add that institutions, whether they are current grantees under these programs or the general public, I encourage the general public and all institutions to read the Joint Statement because it is a profound message in that statement that invites U.S. citizens to really take an introspective look at who we are and what our country is able to do and that the importance of engaging with other cultures. There is just invaluable the statement does not articulate programs specifically, it mentions Fulbright, it mentions the historical context for being globally aware and have expertise. But the fact that it does not articulate specific programs does not mean that these specific programs are not important. That statement is

really a road map to a destination, is not the destination. And I want to make that clear to those who read it that we're not sliding or disregarding program specific initiatives, but the statement is to invite the engagement and the minds, and the efforts, and the skills, and the talents, and perspectives, of everyone who reads it to be able to engage with the State Department and the U.S. Department of Education with international education groups, local and overseas. Anyone that touches this endeavor, this statement is speaking to you an inviting your input inviting new ideas inviting exploration and inquiry because it is necessary for us to re-engage to really step up to move the needle even further than what we have and over these in these 60 years plus administering these programs. There's something in that statement for everyone, whether you are a policy maker, a student, an administrator, members of the community. International education is local and global and to the extent that anyone can really wrap their heads and their hearts and their minds around what it means to grow and be stronger intellectually, internationally, culturally, internationally, and just personally internationally this statement really has a message for you and so we invite your input as we move forward. It was announced during EducationUSA week in July, but again as I said this is just the beginning. It's really an invitation to broaden the table of minds and efforts and talents to come together because these we don't want twenty years to pass without making huge steps and making ourselves known. That this is important to the United States and so we welcome that this is more less than invitation the statement was an invitation to join the partnership and to re-engage and to be a part of this very noble and necessary effort. This past 18 months alone have shown us that we need to have broader perspectives, there's need for different talents there is need for expertise in Health Sciences, need for expertise in communicating and bringing people together and so again I believe this statement is a profound start to get into places that will really surprise all of us as to what we can do if we put our collective minds and efforts together

[Matt] It's an exciting time to be working in international education. I just wanted to ask, did you have any other things that you might want to touch on, Cheryl?

[Cheryl] I think international Education Week is celebrated for a week, but really international Education Week has no time limit. International education is perpetual, and we need - we focus on what we have accomplished. We highlight different topics every November but we need to move our mindset to be, this is wonderful, and we're pausing during this November 15th week to think about international education issues, but we should also always be motivated and mindful that it's not just one snapshot in a week, but it is a lifestyle and a mental position that we should have as we engage with each other in the program office, as we engage, between agencies, as we engage with other scholars and students. I'm reminded of Secretary Cardona's priorities really are focusing on individuals and preparing teachers and preparing students and communities and making them better places and part of that effort is really to expose teachers and students and communities to international education and so it's not just about doing this in a week it's a lifetime commitment of our efforts and our resources.

[Amy] Thanks so much for joining us on the podcast Cheryl it's been really wonderful hearing from you and we're looking forward to celebrating international Education Week

[Cheryl] Amy thank you for the invitation it's always my pleasure to have a platform to talk about international Education Week and the wonderful things that Eiffel is doing and how we can engage with our peers and institutions to further the mission of international education as the Congress envisioned it many many years ago that vision was timely then and it's very timely now and so thank you for the opportunity to talk about international education

[Outro/Matt] Thanks for listening to the Go Global ED Podcast, a production of the International and Foreign Language Education Office at U.S. Department of Education. Be sure to follow us on Twitter at Go Global ED and subscribe to our newsletter to learn more about upcoming podcast episodes and receive IFLE updates.

Guest Biography

Cheryl E. Gibbs is the Senior Director of the office of International and Foreign Language Education. She directs IFLE's grant administration and policy development activities and oversees the administration of all Title VI and Fulbright-Hays institutional grant and fellowship programs. In addition to her role as Senior Director, Cheryl also serves as the Director of IFLE's Advanced Training and Research Division (ATRD) team, and works as a Program Officer for the South Asia portfolio of the National Resource Centers and Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships programs.

Cheryl received a Bachelor of Science in English from Clarion University and a Master of Education in Curriculum Development and School Supervision from Westminster College. Cheryl began her Federal career in the Office of Postsecondary Education in 1984 after relocating to DC when her former career as a high school English teacher in her hometown of Sharon, Pennsylvania ended. She holds the distinction of being the first African-American secondary school teacher hired by the Sharon School District.