

# PROGRAM INFORMATION – SUSI 2024



## CANDIDATE DESCRIPTION AND QUALIFICATIONS

Candidates nominated for this program should:

- demonstrate English language proficiency (speaking, reading, writing, listening);
- have an interest in the Institute topic;
- be between 18 and 25 years of age;
- have at least one semester left of their undergraduate studies, and be committed to returning to their home universities following completion of the program;
- demonstrate strong leadership qualities and potential in their university and community activities;
- indicate a serious interest in learning about the United States;
- have sustained high level of academic achievement, as indicated by grades, awards, and teacher recommendations;
- demonstrate commitment to community service and extracurricular university activities;
- have little or no prior study or travel experience in the United States or elsewhere outside of Europe;
- be mature, responsible, independent, confident, open-minded, tolerant, thoughtful, and inquisitive;
- be willing and able to fully participate in an intensive academic program, community service, and educational travel; and
- be comfortable with campus life, prepared to share living accommodations, and able to adjust to cultural and social practices different from those of their home country.

## OTHER ESSENTIAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

**Program Funding:** Through an award issued to Meridian International Center (Meridian), ECA will cover all participant costs, including program administration; international and visa travel, travel allowances, domestic travel and ground transportation; book, cultural, mailing, and incidental allowances; and housing and subsistence. If the program is conducted virtually, ECA will work with Meridian to provide a technology stipend to all participants.

**Program Requirements and Restrictions:** Candidates should be made aware that they are applying for an intensive and rigorous academic institute and are expected to fully participate in all aspects of the program. Participants must attend all lectures, participate in all required organized activities, and complete all assignments. Due to the intensive nature of the program, participants should not expect to fulfill professional or academic obligations, including remote work for jobs or internships, classwork, or examinations for their home university, while in the United States. Doing so will count as an unexcused absence from program activities. Family members and/or friends may not accompany or join participants for any part of the program. Please make these requirements clear to all nominees.

**English Language Ability:** English Language proficiency is required to participate in this program. All candidates **must** be proficient in English so that they can actively

participate in the academic program. Therefore, candidate interviews must be conducted in English. Host institutions will consider the varying levels of participants' comprehension and speaking ability and will prepare lectures and discussions that meet the highest academic standards while using language appropriate for students where English is their second or third language.

**Housing and Meal Arrangements:** Housing will be shared or single university dorms on campus or full-service hotels within walking distance of most classroom activities. Male and female participants will be housed in separate quarters. In addition to regular group meals and a university meal plan, participants may have access to a kitchen to cook some meals on their own. It is important that nominees are aware of these arrangements and that they are comfortable with such accommodations.

**Special Accommodations:** Care will be taken to ensure that any special requirements regarding diet, daily worship, housing, and medical care are satisfied. Special accommodations will be made available to the greatest extent possible. Should a participant need to quarantine due to positive COVID-19 test results, accommodations will follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines.

**Health Benefits:** All participants will receive the Department of State's Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) health benefit during the U.S.-based in-person component, which provides coverage of up to \$100,000 with a \$25 co-pay per medical visit and a \$75 co-pay per emergency room visit, for the duration of the program. Pre-existing conditions may be covered up to \$100,000, subject to policy exclusions and limitations. ASPE also covers up to \$500 for routine COVID-19 testing requirements in the United States. COVID-19 is treated like any other illness under the ASPE health benefits plan. Information on the health benefit program may be found online at <http://www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos>.

**Travel Policy:** Participants are not allowed to arrive in the United States prior to the start date of the SUSI or remain in the United States after the end date. Similarly, participants will not be permitted to leave the SUSI to visit relatives or friends while in the United States. If a relative or friend wishes to visit a participant, it will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the ECA program officer and the host institution. Participants are required to return to their home countries immediately following the end of the Institute.

**Grounds for Program Dismissal:** Violations of program rules, host institution rules, or local, state, or federal laws can be grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. It is important that these requirements and restrictions be made clear to all candidates before nominations are submitted.

**Virtual Program Contingency:** Should health, safety, and travel conditions continue to pose significant challenges, the SUSI will pivot to a virtual format. The virtual program would consist of a minimum of 36 hours of required programming with a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning. To the extent possible, the virtual programming will include lectures, small group discussions, videos, readings, panels, site visits, leadership development, assignments, and individual and group activities. Participants will be required to fully participate in the entire virtual program from their locations.

**Connectivity:** Should the program need to pivot to a virtual format, participants would need access to a computer and stable internet connection. If a participant does not have access to these two items, Meridian will work with the participant and post to facilitate access. Participants would be expected to actively engage in all program activities, and therefore, they should immediately notify the host institution and post of any issues with their online access during the duration of the program as well as any difficulties affecting their participation.