

## 2020-2021 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Research Program for U.S. Teachers (Fulbright DA)

### Colombia Country Profile

**Partner Organization:** [Fulbright Commission Colombia](#)

**Eligible Program Dates:** August 1st to November 30th, 2020; February 1st to July 15th, 2020. (3 to 6 months)

**Language Requirement:** Spanish proficiency recommended

**Host institution:** Placements will not be limited to specific universities or organizations

**Dependent Information:** An allowance of \$2,000 per eligible dependent will be provided as part of the Fulbright DA grant. The Fulbright Commission Colombia can provide general assistance and guidance, however, the school search is normally done directly by the fellows according to their particular needs and preferences. Most school-age children of Fulbright fellows attend local schools or participate in Spanish immersion or other programs for foreign children, but a tuition allowance is not provided. Tuition fees in private schools can vary between \$300-\$850 per month.



**Country Overview** (Sources: [www.colombiaemb.org/overview](http://www.colombiaemb.org/overview); [www.worldbank.org/en/country/colombia/overview](http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/colombia/overview))

With more than 46 million citizens, Colombia has the second largest population in South America and is Latin America's oldest and most stable democracy. Colombia is a free market economy with major commercial and investment ties to countries around the world, including the U.S.

Situated on the northwestern coast of South America, Colombia is the size of Texas and California combined. It is the only country on the continent with coastline on both the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea. In between is a nation of rich biodiversity, including the Amazon rainforest and the Andes Mountains. A country with modern cities, vast farmlands, diverse cultures and colonial charm, Colombia's economy has grown steadily over the past decade.

In recent years, Colombia has undergone a remarkable transformation – turning the tide on a long running terrorist insurgency. The nation is also now firmly on the path to peace and prosperity. Colombia has received a massive inflow of migrants from Venezuela. Approximately 1.4 million Venezuelans have arrived in Colombia as of September 2019, according to Colombian official statistics. Colombia has taken a leading role in adopting an open borders policy and implementing good practices in the provision of services to Venezuelan migrants and returned Colombians in areas such as education to health, services of employment and humanitarian aid.



## Educational System Overview

In recent years, Colombia has placed education as a priority in order to improve the country's economic and social prosperity, and the country has invested more resources in this sector than in any other area. Colombia is a country in transformation that has made great efforts to offer an inclusive and quality education for all, by implementing policies that have allowed increasing the number of hours that children attend school, ensuring that more children access the system from younger ages, and that more students continue to higher education. The country has also focused on generating and increasing access to higher education for vulnerable populations, as well as on investing in improving teacher training and development.

Colombia has invested in education as a major transformative factor, in the middle of, perhaps, the greatest socio-economic challenge of its recent history: the beginning of the post-conflict and the opening of the country after more than 50 years of war.

Although it faces great challenges, the country has many advantages: abundant natural resources, an open economy that has had a significant growth in recent years and, especially, a young population full of hope and ideas to transform their country.

Education in Colombia is a right and is mandatory for citizens between 5 and 15 years of age. The education system is structured as follows:

1. *Initial Education and Comprehensive Care for Early Childhood* starts from birth and finishes at six years of age. Very recently (2016), the country created the State Policy “*De Cero a Siempre*” (From Zero to Always) that materializes the regulatory and technical advances on early childhood. There are around 2.9 million children and pregnant or lactating mothers in the initial education system, which addresses well-being, education, health, nutrition, recreation and socialization of children.

2. *Basic Education* includes grades from 1st to 9th (children from six to fourteen years old). Approximately 7.5 million students are enrolled in basic education, in more than 50,000 school premises (*sedes escolares*). Many state-run schools in Colombia have an estimated school day of five to six hours, although the government has focused on increasing it to seven hours in order to achieve equity. Those efforts respond to the fact that 19% of students of basic education and 23% of middle school students attend private education institutions, where students receive around eight hours of instruction.

3. *Middle Education* lasts two years: grades 10th and 11th (15 and 16 years old). Approximately 1.1 million young people are enrolled in middle education. Students can study in general academic training programs (academic baccalaureate), vocational training and education programs (technical baccalaureate) or in one of the 137 Teacher Training Schools (*Escuelas Normales Superiores*), which train future preschool and elementary teachers. Upon successful completion of Middle Education, students receive a bachelor's degree and take the national test (SABER 11) to be able to enter higher education.



4. *Higher Education System*: there are approximately 288 Higher Education Institutions (HEI), which offer academic and vocational programs. The HEI are divided as follows:

- **Universities** (*Universidades*) offer both undergraduate academic programs and graduate programs (Specialization, Master's and Doctoral degrees), and participate in scientific and technological research. 28% of HEIs are universities.
- **University Institutions** (*Instituciones Universitarias*) offer professional undergraduate and specialization programs only. 42% of IES correspond to this category.
- **Technological Institutions** (*Instituciones Tecnológicas*) offer technical programs. 18% of HEIs are technological institutions.
- **Professional Technical Institutions** (*Instituciones Técnicas Profesionales*) offer professional training programs for specific jobs and represent 13% of HEIs. The National Training Service (SENA) offers the majority (58%) of technical and technological higher education programs.

The country has generated policies in order to increase the number of employees with graduate degrees and to encourage research. There are currently over 3,970 research groups in the country, and the main areas of research are: Social Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Humanities, Agricultural Sciences and Natural Sciences. In 2019, the government has set health, Education, connectivity, entrepreneurship and access to services as national priorities.

Colombia has a great variety of flexible and non-formal educational models, such as *Escuela Nueva*, which serve vulnerable populations. These models have been implemented for 16% of the students enrolled in basic education. Given its multi-ethnic and multicultural nature, Colombia also has ethno-educational centers, which are schools with majority indigenous populations, that follow an ethnic education program, developed in collaboration with the local community.

Colombia represents biodiversity, a variety of cultures and a range of geographies; Colombians stand out for their creativity, innovative, and entrepreneurial spirit. They are also keen to widen the country's ties with the international community in the academic, economic, scientific, and cultural sectors.

#### **Possible topics of interest to U.S. educators**

Colombia provides a unique opportunity for U.S. educators to learn about the implementation of flexible and non-formal educational models, such as *Escuela Nueva*.

In addition, U.S. educators seeking to develop materials and resources to globalize their classrooms might be interested in the Colombian experience in Multi-ethnic and Multicultural Education.





Lastly, due to the massive inflow of migrants from Venezuela and the transformation of the Education System in the Post-conflict scenario, experiences on Emergency or Migrant Education Programs can be of interest to both U.S. and local teachers on which they could collaborate.

### **Colombia Educational Institutions**

*National Ministry of Education*

[www.mineducacion.gov.co](http://www.mineducacion.gov.co)

Email: [cooperacioninternacional@mineducacion.gov.co](mailto:cooperacioninternacional@mineducacion.gov.co)

Telephone: (57-1) 307-8079

Governmental body in charge of setting up education policies; planning, regulating, supervising, and controlling educational institutions; and assessing the minimum conditions for the operation of educational institutions and academic programs and the granting of the corresponding authorizations.

*Institute for Educational Funding and Studies Abroad - ICETEX*

[www.icetex.gov.co](http://www.icetex.gov.co)

Telephone: (57-1) 417-3535

It promotes enrollment and permanence of students in higher education, through educational loans to finance their tuition and maintenance, especially those lacking economic resources.

*Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (National Testing Center) - ICFES*

[www.icfes.gov.co](http://www.icfes.gov.co)

Email: [contactenos@icfes.gov.co](mailto:contactenos@icfes.gov.co)

Telephone: (57-1) 484-1460

It evaluates the Colombian Education System by testing students throughout their studies (3, 5, 7, 9, 11 grades and after they finish a higher education program). It evaluates the results to support the improvement of the system.

*National Council for Accreditation (CNA)*

[www.mineducacion.gov.co](http://www.mineducacion.gov.co)

Email: [cna@cna.gov.co](mailto:cna@cna.gov.co)

Telephone: (57-1) 341-1050

*COLCIENCIAS*

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Colciencias is the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation within the Colombian Government and it is responsible for leading activities related to the promotion and the conduction of scientific and applied research in Colombia.

