Dear Friends:

Please accept my warm greetings as you gather in Huntington Beach for the 32nd Annual Conference of the Council on Standards for International Educational Travel. I applaud your work to promote and advance student exchanges around the world, and am sending my best wishes for a productive gathering.

Throughout my career in public service, I have had the great honor to travel the world on behalf of our country. Most recently, as Secretary of State, I traveled nearly a million miles, visiting 112 countries to strengthen and build partnerships, advocate for women’s rights and fight to make them a priority in international relations, and stand up for our values. I can say from personal experience that traveling abroad, no matter the reason, can be truly transformational. Indeed, I found any time I spent abroad as a young woman to be especially rewarding. And I know my running mate, Tim Kaine, was deeply influenced by the years he spent as a young man working as a missionary in Honduras. He came back to the United States with an even greater passion for service, and a deeper understanding of the world around us.

That’s why I am delighted that CSIET continues to advocate for meaningful, cultural and educational exchanges. Each year, thousands of engaged young people from around the world travel to the United States, eager to learn about American life and share perspectives from their own countries. Families who welcome these exchange students into their homes and hearts not only enrich the lives of their guests, they also help build people-to-people connections that span the globe and last a lifetime. The goodwill, generosity, and mutual understanding fostered through these programs are critical to meeting the challenges of today’s world; such citizen diplomacy may start with one visiting student and his or her host family, but it ripples throughout communities in the United States and abroad.

As you well know, when we dispel stereotypes and open new avenues of dialogue across boundaries and borders, we enrich ourselves and the world around us. Indeed, a free exchange of ideas is crucial to our success as a nation, and to the success of any nation, and I thank you for engaging in this essential work.

With warm regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

Hillary Rodham Clinton