

Key Questions and Answers

About the Davis-United World College Scholars program



William D. Adams

President, Colby College, Waterville, Maine

Bio: William D. Adams, Ph.D., took office as president of Colby College in 2000. He has worked to extend the College's long tradition of global reach in its curriculum, in its ambitious study-abroad program and in the recruitment of international students and faculty members. A graduate of Colorado College, he later spent a year in France as a Fulbright Scholar. He earned a Ph.D. in the History of Consciousness program at the University of California at Santa Cruz. Prior to becoming president of Colby, he was president of Bucknell University in Pennsylvania for five years.

1. Why is Colby College sharply increasing the number of international scholars?

We're doing it for a simple and compelling reason—because we believe that a contemporary college education ought to be both cross-cultural and transnational. International students contribute to the intellectual life of the college in distinctive ways, helping set the stage for regular, sometimes surprising, and often profound exchanges across lines of nationality, culture, religion, background and experience.

2. How dramatic is the change?

This fall the numbers of 'non-resident aliens' (the official federal government definition of foreign students) in the student population will jump by a third. Over the last four years, the total number of international students, including dual citizens, permanent residents and language assistants, doubled. The proportion of international students in the student body might be close to 15 percent in several years.

3. What are the benefits for international students?

There's more demand than ever from international students, particularly those who come from conflict zones, for educational opportunity in the United States. International students aren't always eligible, as American students are, to receive need-based financial aid. So the Davis-UWC scholarships, which cover up to the entire cost of a four-year college education, are a special boon to eligible students.

4. How do faculty members and domestic students at Colby feel about the presence of more international students on campus?

Faculty members at Colby tell me that these scholarship recipients are among the very best students they've ever had in their classes. Domestic students have been fully supportive too, because this is a chance to supplement their own experiences in studying abroad with daily opportunities to exchange views with contemporaries from throughout the world. I've been able to see for myself how the social and academic life of the college is both elevated and energized by the presence of these international students.

5. What's so distinctive about this effort at Colby?

It's an unusual partnership among a group of liberal arts colleges and universities, a visionary donor and a dynamic college preparatory program. The collaboration yields a program that is far more than the sum of its parts. The kind of preparation that international students receive at the United World Colleges makes for a fairly seamless transition to life at Colby. And the significant financial support of Shelby Davis and his family allows needy students from around the globe, chosen on the basis of merit alone, to study among American classmates here. The international students are direct beneficiaries of the program, of course, but so, in critically important ways, are we.

(For an op-ed about the importance of international students in American higher education, or to arrange an interview with William D. Adams, contact Stephen Collins at 207-872-3549.)

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Shelby M.C. Davis

Founder, Chief Investment Officer and Chief Executive Officer, Davis Selected Advisers, L.P.

Bio: Shelby M.C. Davis is founder, chief investment officer and chief executive officer of Davis Selected Advisers, L.P., a \$30-billion mutual fund and money management firm. He and his family—including Andrew Davis, a trustee of Colby College—have contributed more than \$55 million to United World College, a private international college preparatory program with 10 campuses worldwide. The family also contributes approximately \$10 million a year to support the Davis-UWC Scholarship Program. The Davis scholarships underwrite up to the full educational and living costs of UWC graduates who win admission at Colby, Middlebury and Wellesley colleges, College of the Atlantic, and Princeton University.

1. What led to your interest in funding college scholarships for international students?

My parents were both internationalists. My mother wrote a book, published in 1930, about Russians and their behavior at the League of Nations. My father eventually became the U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland in the Nixon and Ford years. When I was still in my teens, I took two trips around the world. It was on those trips that I began to understand that only through interaction between people can we build bridges of both understanding and knowledge.

2. How, and why, did you get involved in supporting United World College students?

After meeting Phil Geier, I went out to visit the UWC campus in New Mexico. I was walking past one of the meeting rooms and here were these two students—one Palestinian and one Israeli—with their arms around each other. That just blew me away. In five minutes, I got it. I understood what they were trying to do. I found myself thinking: Hey this is something I can believe in.

3. Were the college scholarships a natural extension of the support for United World College?

Sure. These students are coming from Bulgaria or Russia or China and they're succeeding, in a challenging academic environment, in a second language. They've got the fire in the belly that they need to succeed. And if they do, aren't they worth backing? They're battle tested. They're a good bet. But if your father earns \$30 a month, how is he going to fund \$30,000 a year? My goal, frankly, is to have all students that graduate at United World Colleges to go on to university.

4. Is this an unlimited commitment?

It is. I didn't want to cut it off. You meet these kids, you're already impressed. Anybody who can get admitted to Colby from Bulgaria, I figure they deserve it. Now, when I meet Bro [Adams, Colby's president] and he says that professors here come up to him and say, 'Get me more students like these' because they're enriching the classroom, they're fun to teach, they bring different points of view to the discussions and they're making a big impact on the American students as learning a lot themselves—that just confirms the value of it.

5. How did the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., last fall affect your thinking about the program?

My whole company could have been wiped out on 9/11. My office is on the 94th floor of Two World Trade, the second building to get hit. Our board meeting was scheduled for that morning at 8:30. My two sons, who are now running the business, were going to be there, my partner for 40 years, the chairman of our funds, planned to be there, and all the directors would have been present. By chance, in August the meeting was switched to the O'Hare Hilton in Chicago. So everybody was on their way to that meeting that morning. My son, Chris, was on the last plane out of LaGuardia Airport, and the captain of the plane said, 'There's something going on at the World Trade Center.' They looked over and saw the ball of flame as the second plane crashed.

I was so grateful, of course, that we'd been spared. But I also felt that we had a special responsibility to do more, in programs like this one, to educate young Americans about global realities while exposing international students to U.S. college life.

(To request an interview with Shelby M.C. Davis, contact Stephen Collins at 207-872-3549)

Key Questions and Answers

About the Davis-United World College Scholars program



Philip O. Geier

President, United World College of the American West

Bio: Philip O. Geier, Ph.D., is president of the United World College in Montezuma, N.M. There are 2,000 students at United World College's 10 campuses around the world. The campuses are located in Canada, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Norway, Singapore, Swaziland, Venezuela, Wales and the United States. Geier recently established the Bartos Institute for Constructive Engagement of Conflict on his campus to offer training in creative conflict resolution.

1. How would you describe the United World College part of this story?

We're a movement with 10 campuses worldwide and 2,000 kids from 140 countries. This movement is about building bridges between people, cultures and places. Part of what we're doing is creating what the State Department calls 'second-track' diplomacy—making networks of tomorrow's global decision-makers, fostering a life-long capacity for dialogue.

2. Where do the Davis-UWC scholarships fit in?

Back in 1998, Shelby Davis contributed \$45 million to United World College in order to fund 100 merit-based scholarships for American students to attend UWC campuses around the world. The newer program is a logical next step. Students from different kinds of backgrounds from all over the globe can now aspire to go on to college in the United States.

3. How do you evaluate the progress so far?

The story-behind-the-story is of a conservative money manager who simply realizes that if America isn't competitive in the global economy we're not going to be at the table. He believes that the United World College movement and the scholarships at places like Colby College are as important for Americans as they are for the international students.

4. What's the next step?

We want to challenge colleges and universities to realize that it's in their own best long-term strategic interest to create these kinds of scholarship opportunities for international students. By his example, Shelby Davis hopes to help transform higher education in its treatment of international students and, while he's at it, encourage other philanthropists to join the effort.

5. How do you evaluate the program so far?

There are local results, and a global connection. Colby College has become an amazingly diverse community, over an extremely brief period of time, because of its new international diversity. This is really an example of a privately-funded effort taking up the slack from the public sector in producing an incontrovertible good. Americans should be out in the world in ways that transform perceptions and attitudes about the United States in northern Europe, in south Asia, in Latin America and everywhere you can imagine. This program is a linchpin example of doing so.

(To arrange an interview with Philip Geier or for more information about the United World College, contact Elizabeth Martin at 505-989-1733.)