

Sub-Saharan Africa

Regional EducationUSA Profile

Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Réunion, Rwanda, St. Helena, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

55

EducationUSA Advising Centers in the Region

31 Comprehensive
20 Standard
4 Reference

The EducationUSA network across Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) operates in 44 countries and comprises 55 advising centers, including 31 comprehensive, 20 standard, and four reference centers. A total of 63 EducationUSA advisers work throughout the region. Of the 55 centers in the region, 45 are in U.S. embassies and consulates, seven are in American Corners or Spaces, one is in a library, one is in a non-profit organization, and one is virtual.

The majority of advisers in the region work part time with EducationUSA and have other responsibilities within public diplomacy sections at U.S. embassies or consulates. Public diplomacy sections have restructured staffing in recent years, which has reduced the number of hours spent on advising. For that reason, higher education institutions (HEIs) might notice updated titles in adviser email signatures that reflect the wider purview of their new responsibilities (e.g., education outreach specialist).

All standard and comprehensive centers offer EducationUSA general information and subject-specific sessions, respond to queries from U.S. colleges and universities, offer opportunities for HEIs to make presentations to public audiences, and contribute to pre-departure orientations. Every student who has an I-20 form for an accredited U.S. institution is welcome at pre-departure orientation, regardless of whether they worked with EducationUSA during the admissions process.

Many comprehensive and standard centers in the region offer EducationUSA

Scholars Programs, a competitive cohort program that guides academically talented students through the entire *Your Five Steps to U.S. Study* process.

The EducationUSA Opportunity Funds program, serving high-achieving prospective students who demonstrate substantial financial need, operates at 15 advising centers in Botswana, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana (two centers), Malawi, Nigeria (two centers), South Africa, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (three centers). The high-achieving, low-income students who pass the rigorous selection process for this program are given intensive preparation and support to become competitive as they seek full funding from U.S. institutions. Opportunity Funds provide support for graduate and undergraduate students.

Regional Overview

Sub-Saharan Africa includes all countries south of the Sahara Desert. According to the U.S. Census International Database, in 2023, the total population of Sub-Saharan Africa was approximately 1.2 billion people, almost 20 percent of whom were between the ages of 15 and 24. According to the United Nations, these young people will represent 42 percent of the world's college-age youth in 10 years. This explosion in college-age youth is creating three scenarios: First, many SSA countries do not have the local capacity to provide tertiary education for qualified students. As a result, SSA students are highly mobile and seek higher education opportunities outside their home countries. Second, the cost associated with tertiary education at home or abroad



¹ "Africa" in this section refers to the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa

An electronic version of this publication containing hyperlinks is available at <https://educationusa.state.gov/us-higher-education-professionals/recruitment-resources/global-guide>



is often a challenge for prospective students. Third, global competition for the recruitment of these students has increased.

Sub-Saharan African students are some of the most highly mobile students seeking higher education opportunities abroad. According to the *2023 Open Doors® Report on International Educational*

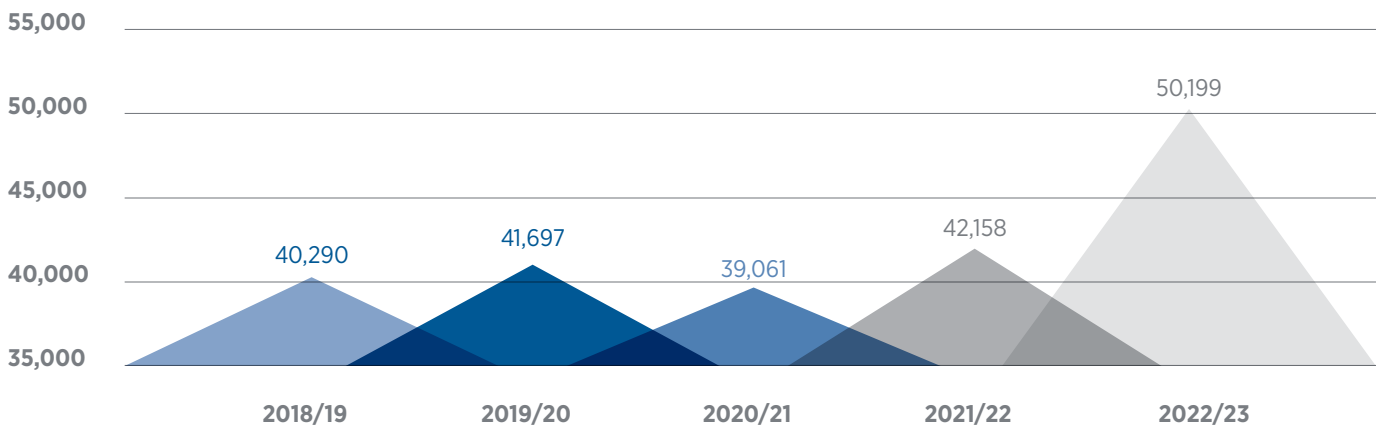
Exchange, 50,199 students from SSA studied in the United States during the academic year (AY) 2022-2023, an increase of 18.1 percent from the previous year.

Over the past six years, 10 countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte

D'Ivoire, and Cameroon) have each sent more than 1,000 students to the United States each year. They accounted for 81 percent of SSA students studying in the United States during AY 2022-2023.

The top five countries (Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Africa) accounted for 68 percent of SSA students studying in the United States during AY

Student Mobility in the Region (Five-Year Trend)



Sub-Saharan Africa

2022-2023, with Nigeria alone accounting for slightly more than one-third of all students from the region.

The rising numbers of young people and SSA students' interest in pursuing higher education abroad make the region an important recruitment destination for U.S. HEIs. Furthermore, technological advances have increased the need for coursework and training in STEM fields to meet local workforce development needs.

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Institute of Statistics, more than 412,207 students from the SSA region are studying abroad. This number has increased 9.4 percent since 2016, when 388,408 students from the region studied outside their home countries. By comparison, the growth of outbound students worldwide is 8 percent.

Competition for SSA students will continue to increase. The UK has long been a popular destination for students from Anglophone countries on the continent. Expect China, France, Malaysia, Germany, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia to recruit in SSA and to offer scholarships to students. Prior to the war, Ukraine and Russia also demonstrated tremendous

interest in recruiting students from the region. Canada has invested substantial funding in its recruitment efforts in the region and promotes the opportunity for permanent residency. Government officials throughout the region ask that the U.S. government provide scholarships to students directly, as other countries do. EducationUSA advisers explain that in the U.S. decentralized educational system, scholarships (except for Fulbright) are offered by the institutions themselves.

Sub-Saharan Africa includes several regional, economic, and political organizations that bind together nations across the continent. For example, 15 countries in West Africa comprise the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) includes 16 countries in Southern Africa, and the East African Community (EAC) is a regional intergovernmental organization that brings together eight countries. These sub-regional blocs encourage interregional trade and migration and offer educated youth opportunities to seek additional employment opportunities.

According to the World Bank's publication Global Economic Prospects, economic growth in SSA is expected to accelerate

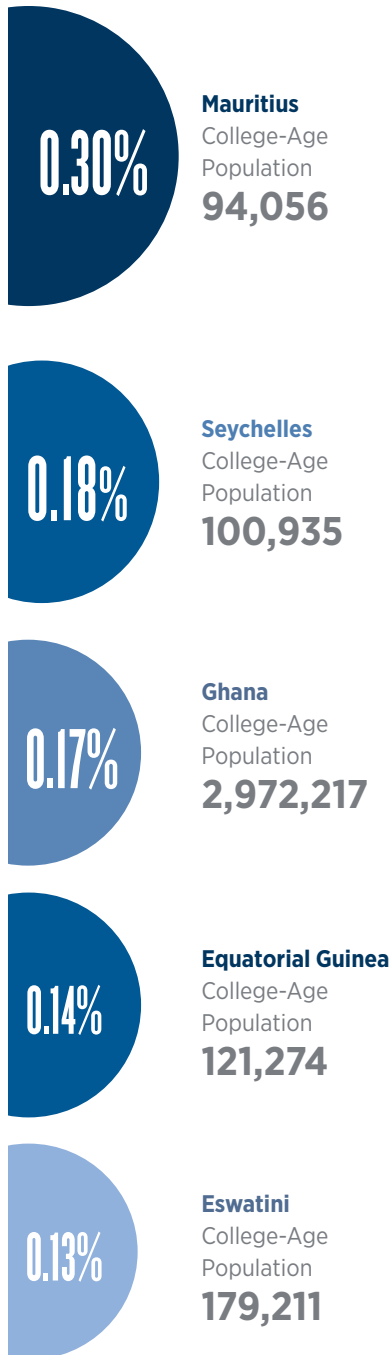
to 3.8 percent in 2024. However, that growth will be slowest in the region's three largest economies – Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola – due in part to the falling cost of metals that they export. Across the region more broadly, factors that could impact growth include the rise in political instability and violence both in SSA and other regions that impact trade (e.g., the continuing conflict in the Middle East), increased frequency of adverse weather events, and higher risk of government defaults. Persistent inflation has also impacted students' ability to afford U.S. studies.

Agriculture, oil and gas, banking, tourism, and technology are the dominant industries in the region, leading many students to pursue studies and careers in STEM fields. Expertise in agriculture and agricultural engineering, water dam construction, and irrigation development are particularly sought after in Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe.

EducationUSA continues to offer virtual advising to engage and support students in SSA. The region continues to host U.S. recruiters and admissions representatives in virtual recruitment programs to showcase the strength and diversity of U.S. universities and colleges. Some of the



Five Countries of Origin in the Region with Highest Per Capita College-Age Student Mobility to the United States



Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics; Indicator: 2023 or most recent Population of the official age for tertiary education, both sexes

platforms used for virtual advising include Facebook, Google Meet, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Viber, WhatsApp, and Zoom. Prospective students in the region have continued to participate in virtual programs, with Facebook Live and WhatsApp being the preferred platforms as they use less bandwidth. Instagram is growing in popularity, and Zoom is also commonly used.

While the region is home to diverse educational systems, most systems require students to sit for final-year national exams. For example, in West Africa, students take the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). Kenya requires the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE), and South Africa mandates that students take “matric” exams. All Francophone countries require the French baccalaureate, or the “bac.”

Mobile phone usage is ubiquitous in SSA, and many students access the internet through their phones to research and apply to U.S. universities. Mobile-friendly websites are critical to reaching these students and ensuring that institutional information is available and accessible. Because costs associated with mobile device data plans can limit the number of students able to participate in virtual activities and the amount of time they can remain engaged, prospective students prefer shorter presentations. Unreliable electrical service can also present a challenge in some parts of the region. Many students rely on EducationUSA advising centers and American Spaces to access books, test preparation materials, technology, workstations, and free internet connections.

Recent Trends

Interest in studying in the United States remains high among both students and parents, but competition in the region is fierce. An increasing number of HEIs are visiting the region for outreach and recruitment, and several well-known education recruitment tour providers are offering tours in the region for the first time for institutions looking for logistical support. EducationUSA advisers strongly advocate for more U.S. HEIs to visit as the best way to build relationships and demonstrate their commitment to the region. Further information about

structured opportunities to visit appears later in this section.

Top Senders and Countries to Watch

Below are the top 10 countries in the region by number of students studying in the United States. Student Mobility Facts and Figures sheets for all countries are available on the *Open Doors* website.

1. Nigeria
2. Ghana
3. Kenya
4. Ethiopia
5. South Africa
6. Rwanda
7. Zimbabwe
8. Democratic Republic of the Congo
9. Côte d'Ivoire
10. Cameroon

This year, the region reached a mobility milestone with two countries in the top 25 countries sending students to the United States: Nigeria at No. 7 and Ghana at No. 23. Sub-Saharan Africa experienced 18.1 percent growth in 2023, the highest of any world region. To highlight just how tremendous the growth in the region has been, nine of the top 10 sending countries sent more than 100 additional students than they had in the previous year, eight sent more than 200 additional students,

African Countries with More than 1,000 Students in the United States

Country	# Of Students	% Change
Nigeria	17,640	22%
Ghana	6,468	32%
Kenya	4,059	7%
Ethiopia	3,006	12%
South Africa	2,713	14%
Zimbabwe	1,789	19%
Congo, Dem. Rep. of the (Kinshasa)	1,660	31%
Rwanda	1,372	12%
Uganda	1,088	20%
Cameroon	1,086	17%
Cote d'Ivoire	1,072	4%

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five sent more than 300 additional students, and two sent more than 1,500 additional students.

Though Democratic Republic of the Congo (Kinshasa) ranks among the top 10 senders of students from the region, it is important to note that the majority of students from the Democratic Republic of the Congo apply to study in the United States from outside of their home country.

HEIs should also consider the following locations in their recruitment plans to help diversify SSA students on U.S. campuses: Botswana, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. These countries have experienced steady growth. It is important to remember that recruitment rooted in relationships

is often most successful, so institutions should explore recruiting in the home countries of their staff, students, or alumni. Since travel may be restricted by time and budget, EducationUSA advisers in these countries are prepared to offer virtual sessions and additional in-country guidance for visiting institutions when given advance notice.

What to Expect in the Next Three to Five Years

Sub-Saharan African students will continue to seek higher education outside of their home countries, as the number of qualified students far exceeds the spaces available at local universities.

Continued population growth will exacerbate this capacity issue. Africa's 2.34 percent population growth rate in

2023 is very high compared to the U.S. rate of 0.54 percent and is projected to remain above two percent for the next 10 years, according to Statistics Times. The United States Census Bureau's International Database reports that 19.8 percent of people in Africa are aged 15 to 24. According to the United Nations, in 10 years 42 percent of the world's youth aged 15 to 24 will live in Africa.

In addition to capacity constraints, students in most SSA countries face being assigned to a field of study based on their secondary school leaving exams. Prospective students and their families appreciate the flexibility of being allowed to declare a major after two years of undergraduate study in the United States. Prospective students and their families need substantial instruction to understand the U.S. educational system because it is so dissimilar to their own. EducationUSA provides many information sessions to help with this, but HEIs should also be prepared to educate prospective students on the U.S. system. Students are also interested in ways to earn U.S. degrees online.

Finally, interest in graduate study in the United States has grown and is expected to continue to increase. In 2021, 34.2 percent of all SSA students in the United States studied at the graduate level, and by 2023 it rose to 42.3 percent. Sub-Saharan African students are seeking specialized advanced degrees that may not be offered in their home countries. Funding opportunities through graduate assistantships are another reason students seek graduate study in the United States.

Virtual Engagement and Social Media Usage

An increase in social media usage throughout the region has enabled advisers and HEIs to better connect with students, particularly outside of major cities. This is a huge benefit in a region where in-person recruitment and fairs don't often extend beyond major cities because of budget, time, and sometimes travel warnings. Many sessions are live streamed on the centralized SSA EducationUSA Africa Connection page and on local Facebook pages run by advising centers, allowing students, counselors, and other stakeholders to access the sessions. Advisers also use

Regional Student Totals Top Five Countries of Origin

Country	2022/23	% Change
Nigeria	17,640	22%
Ghana	6,468	32%
Kenya	4,059	7%
Ethiopia	3,006	12%
South Africa	2,713	14%

WhatsApp, Instagram, and Telegram to communicate with students, counselors, and other stakeholders. HEIs can participate in local or regional sessions by contacting REAC: Regional Managers or advisers.

Facebook continues to be popular in the region, while Instagram use is growing. Statista provides useful data by subregion. In 2022, Facebook had 57.7 million users in West Africa, 42.7 million in East Africa, 27.1 million in Southern Africa, and 15.7 million in Central Africa. In contrast, Instagram had 14.9 million users in West Africa, 9.8 million in East Africa, 6.8 million in Southern Africa, and two million in Central Africa in the same year.

WhatsApp is the primary platform for communication in the region because it is inexpensive and easy to use. WhatsApp is expected to have 91.64 million users in SSA in 2024, and that number is expected to grow to 135.44 million by 2029. Being on WhatsApp will establish an HEI as willing to meet students “where they live.” Open office hours on WhatsApp can provide a space where students can actively engage with HEIs.

Mobile technology has proved to be the most affordable and accessible means to engage many Sub-Saharan African students. Many students complete their applications on their mobile phones. According to the [2023 GSMA Mobile Economy Report](#), by 2022, 489 million people had subscribed to mobile services in SSA. By 2030, 692 million people in SSA will subscribe to mobile services, equivalent to 50 percent of the region’s population.

Despite this growth in social media and virtual activity, there is still a socioeconomic and gender-based digital divide. EducationUSA advisers have made efforts to address this by using affordable social media and virtual platforms and increasing the use of mobile phones.

HEIs should make the most of the social media realities in the region by creating short informational clips with basic facts and scholarship opportunities. Students often lament how costly it can be to watch long videos or join virtual sessions. Short clips can be impactful if

there is follow-up information for future engagement.

Successful Recruiting Strategies

- Students and their families want the opportunity to meet with HEI representatives in person to know that they are committed to them and the region. Plan to invest up to three years connecting with students and families in SSA before expecting a return on investment.
- Current students and alumni are a valuable recruiting resource. Prospective students and their parents show greater interest in the U.S. higher educational experience when they hear the positive impact from others in their home country.
- Develop sessions for parents, as they appreciate the chance to interact directly with U.S. university representatives. This will increase institutional credibility and demonstrate commitment to their students and the region. In Francophone Africa, it will be important to have French speakers available to provide interpretation if necessary.
- Competition from countries with generous immigration policies, particularly Canada, makes it important for U.S. HEIs to highlight the Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) benefits of studying in the United States.
- Prospective students are likely to use mobile phones to access HEI websites; therefore, be certain that websites are optimized for mobile devices. In addition, having attached documents in mobile-friendly form allows students to dive deeper into their research while still using their phones.
- All SSA countries have a mixture of students whose families can pay all or a portion of the cost of attendance and families who cannot afford to pay any of the cost. When offering scholarships, consider consolidating multiple smaller ones into fewer, more substantial awards to ensure more comprehensive support. This demonstrated commitment to the region will have a direct effect on other students considering the institution.
- Consider waiving application fees and enabling payment from mobile money accounts to mitigate additional expenses associated with bank checks and traditional money transfers. It is important to disclose the full cost of attending your institution so families can plan properly.
- Partner with two or three colleagues to offer an EducationUSA Sub-Saharan Africa “Wednesday Webinar” on a specific topic relevant to students at the time of the presentation and then provide information about the institution. Complete the [interest form](#) and review [Tips for Presentations to Students in SSA](#) to enable better communication with students in the region. Always feel free to reach out to REACs and advisers with your cultural communication questions. They will be happy to help.

U.S. Study Abroad

Top Five Receiving Countries in the Region

Destination	2021/22	% Change
South Africa	1,543	1,634%
Kenya	737	1,947%
Ghana	697	1,215%
Tanzania	359	1,138%
Rwanda	235	553%

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- In admissions letters, direct students to EducationUSA pre-departure orientation sessions, which typically take place in July. Many countries in the region include presentations by consular officers in their sessions.

Institutional Partnerships

EducationUSA recognizes the enormous opportunity posed by the projected doubling of Sub-Saharan Africa’s population by 2050 and the “youth bulge” it will produce. Therefore, HEIs are encouraged to reach out to public affairs offices at U.S. embassies and consulates if they are interested in exploring academic partnerships.

Developing existing links and promoting new partnerships at the university level will strengthen Africa’s educational institutions – enhancing regional prosperity, security, and stability. EducationUSA advisers recommend working with alumni and current Fulbright teachers and students abroad to develop the all-important personal relationships that may lead to successful partnerships. U.S. schools are encouraged to have the duties and expectations of both partners clearly stated in a memorandum of understanding when engaging in any partnership in the region.

Foreign Government and Private Funding

Governments in SSA have limited funds to support tertiary study abroad. Students rely on support from host countries, and as such, personnel of local education ministries may be unfamiliar with the decentralized organization of the U.S. higher education system.

The newsletter [Opportunities for Africans](#) contains various scholarship opportunities for African students. HEIs should consider adding scholarship information to this publication as well as to the EducationUSA website.

Examples of foreign government and private funding opportunities are listed by country below.

Angola. Angola has a new Presidential Scholarship offered by the Institute for Scholarship Management, offering 300 scholarships for graduate students. Awardees can choose their destinations based on a list of 600 universities from the Shanghai Academic Ranking of World Universities and must produce an acceptance letter from one of these institutions within one year of receiving the scholarship. While many students opt for Brazil and Portugal to be able to study in Portuguese, and some go to China or Cuba due to their specialties (e.g., medical school), EducationUSA has already supported nine students who were awarded this scholarship who chose the United States as their study destination.

Botswana. The government of Botswana offers the [Top Achievers Scholarship](#), which is administered by the Department of Tertiary Education Financing (DTEF).

Ghana. The [Ghana Education Trust Fund \(GET Fund\)](#) supports local and U.S. study in fields of interest to the government, including public health, policy, and administration, though this funding is limited and highly competitive.

Regional Economics and Market Demands

Although the fastest-growing employment sectors in the region vary by location, there are specific fields of study that are generally in high demand. In 2020, Africa.com compiled a [list of the most in-demand fields in Africa](#), predicting that STEM fields, agriculture, and tourism, among others, will likely remain popular as students seek skills in sectors with strong employment prospects.

Agriculture is a crucial sector of the economy in SSA and is likely to become even more critical as the continent continues to face a rapidly growing population and the challenges that accompany urbanization. Mining is a key pillar of many economies in the region. It offers a broad array of employment opportunities, including careers for engineers, geologists, information and communications technology (ICT) professionals, and human resource professionals. As Africa’s middle class grows, banking and finance are also likely to remain critical economic drivers. As a result, institutions offering Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs and programs in financial management, insurance, and banking are likely to interest students from the region.

ICT is a significant driver of SSA economies, where mobile phone usage is the highest in the world, primarily due to low internet connectivity. As the region’s economy grows, investment in the growth of ICT infrastructure will increase rapidly, and the continent will see higher demand for software developers, systems and

Five Countries of Origin (with over 100 students) with Highest Percentage Growth, International Students in the Region (Five-Year Trend)

Country	2018/19	2022/23	% Change
Ghana	3,661	6,468	77%
Somalia	76	120	58%
Sierra Leone	181	280	55%
Ethiopia	2,061	3,006	46%
DR Congo	1,164	1,660	43%

77.0%

Ghana has the largest percentage growth in the region over the last five years (*with over 100 students*)

network administrators, business and systems analysts, and technical and business architects.

Entrepreneurship has been growing significantly in SSA over the past few years and is expected to become one of the leading employment providers. Africa leads the world in the number of women starting businesses, with an almost equal number of male and female entrepreneurs.

As the economy improves and businesses become established, transportation, logistics, and warehousing will become significant. A career in transportation requires sound knowledge of construction, architecture, town planning, logistics engineering, and business management.

Tourism is a booming industry in Africa, contributing 8.5 percent to the continent's GDP and over two percent of employment in hotels, travel agencies, airlines, passenger transportation services, restaurants, and leisure industries. Students entering this sector will need to study in specialized tourism and hospitality management programs.

Regional EducationUSA Events, Fairs, and Conferences (in person and virtual)

In 2024, SSA will host an inaugural in-person "Big Five" Fair Tour across the top five sending countries on the continent – South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, and Nigeria. The tour will begin in Cape Town, South Africa, on September 5 and conclude in Lagos, Nigeria, on September 19. Cities in the tour include Cape Town, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Kumasi, Accra, Abuja, and Lagos.

EducationUSA Sub-Saharan Africa will offer its fifth annual virtual fair in October 2024. Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) also host annual events, including virtual fairs or showcases. HEIs are also invited to participate in the Wednesday Webinar programs described above.

The semiannual "Meet and Greet" event is another opportunity to connect and engage with EducationUSA advisers from throughout the continent. For broader questions about the region, the two REACs for the region are available twice a year for open "REAC Office Hours," and

they always welcome the opportunity to have individual consultations with HEIs, especially those new to the region.

HEIs are encouraged to join the closed [EducationUSA Africa Facebook Group](#) to stay up to date on events happening throughout the region. Institutions can also join or update their information on the [Sub-Saharan Africa listserv](#), which advisers use to email information about upcoming events and opportunities.

The number of fair tours and agency matchmaking events coming to the region is rapidly expanding. EducationUSA often collaborates with these third-party providers, and U.S. HEIs are encouraged to explore the various timeframes now available. EducationUSA is also curating a [list of events](#) in the region. While EducationUSA does not officially endorse any of these events, HEI representatives are encouraged to review the list for possible opportunities for their institution.

U.S. Study Abroad in the Region

According to the 2023 *Open Doors* report, 4,614 U.S. students studied in the SSA region in AY 2021-2022. The top three study abroad destinations continued to be South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana, with South Africa being number 18 in the world.

The State Department's USA Study Abroad branch is collaborating with government and higher education stakeholders throughout the region to build capacity for U.S. study abroad programming. USA Study Abroad's [Increase and Diversify Education Abroad](#)

[for U.S. Students \(IDEAS\) Program](#) awarded 37 grants to U.S. colleges and universities in 2024 to develop study abroad programs across the world focusing on various foreign policy themes, including economic development and entrepreneurship, global health, and technology and innovation. Eleven U.S. colleges and universities are using 2024 IDEAS grants to expand their higher education partnerships and study abroad programming in eight countries across Sub-Saharan Africa. USA Study Abroad also provided funding to five U.S. embassies in the region in 2024 to implement U.S. Study Abroad Engagement Grant projects that will build foreign higher education institutions' capacity to partner with U.S. colleges and universities and host more U.S. study abroad students.

U.S. study abroad students are invited to join EducationUSA programming activities throughout the region. U.S. institutions are encouraged to provide information and resources to study abroad participants prior to their departure from the United States so that they can promote the institution to local audiences.

In the past, U.S. students, including Gilman Scholars, have delivered general presentations about their institutions, joined conversation groups, assisted with mock admissions interviews, and participated in alumni fairs and other events that allowed them to engage with local high school and university students.

Best and Worst Times of the Year to Interact with Students (in person and virtual)

The best times to plan in-person travel for recruitment are when schools are in session. Research local holidays and testing periods and avoid travel during these times.

It is best to avoid travel to the region during Ramadan, Easter, Christmas, exam periods (April to June and November to December), and national elections. U.S. HEI representatives are encouraged to note U.S. Department of State travel warnings posted at [travel.state.gov](#), and U.S. citizens should utilize the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) before traveling abroad.

For additional guidance, HEI representatives can reach out to REACs and advisers to check for the best times to visit and interact with students.