

Another Letter to Russian College Students

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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[Professor Paul Kindlon's recent comment](#) catalogued the failings and foibles of the United States and its people, providing 20 reasons why Russian young people should reconsider their plans to move to the United States.

I strongly disagree with the tone of his letter and the conclusions he reaches.

As someone who has worked with Russian students for many years, I would like to respond to his criticisms and point out four compelling reasons why Russian students choose to pursue higher education in the United States.

1. Strength of academic programs. While U.S. secondary education may sometimes leave much to be desired, higher education in the United States is of the highest quality. Students have the opportunity to work in state-of-the-art labs and conduct original research in world-class libraries. In its most recent list of the world's best universities, Britain's The Times concluded

that 14 of the world's 20 best universities are American. Institutions such as Harvard, Stanford and the California Institute of Technology have earned global reputations for the quality of the education they provide.

2. Diversity of institutions and programs. There are several thousand U.S. universities, and it is possible to find a school that suits everyone's needs. Some students may prefer the small seminars of a classic New England liberal arts college. Others may thrive in a large research institution. The wide range of academic choices ensures that every person can find a school suited to his or her needs.

3. Opportunities for personal development. American universities provide an unparalleled opportunity for participation in extracurricular activities. The most recent London Olympics included participants who had honed their talents on college fields. My local university puts on theater performances of such high quality that students graduate from that stage straight onto Broadway. Regardless of whether their interest is journalism or community service, international students in U.S. schools will be able to grow just as fully on a personal level as they do academically.

4. Greater future opportunity. Frankly speaking, the reason Professor Kindlon is seeing Russians' growing interest in life abroad is because studying in a U.S. university opens a world of opportunity for them. On a very practical level, studying for a U.S. degree provides a student with outstanding reading, speaking, writing and critical thinking skills in English. English will remain the world's dominant language for the near future, and these students are equipping themselves for this English-speaking planet. Secondly, in our increasingly globalized world, a U.S. education provides students with credentials that are immediately recognized by multinational corporations and international organizations. By studying in a foreign country, the student demonstrates the ability to adapt and succeed in a new environment. Immersion in a foreign country provides students with unparalleled cultural sensitivity and coping skills. All of these skills are invaluable for a wide range of careers, regardless of whether the student chooses to make a future in the United States, Europe, or Russia.

As the new school year begins in Russia, it is a good time for Russian students to consider the best way for them to achieve their professional and personal goals. I myself had the opportunity to study with outstanding teachers at St. Petersburg State University and know first-hand that students can get an outstanding education in Russia.

Professor Kindlon certainly pointed out that life is not perfect in any country, and he is correct to note that students should not expect to find a "promised land" abroad. But at the same time, higher education is probably the single most important investment someone will make in life. That education will shape the student's future and Russian students should be fully aware of the wonderful opportunities that a U.S. education can provide.

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