

McFaul Is Alumnus of Defunded Russia Studies Program

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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WASHINGTON — A U.S. government program for the study of Russia and the former Soviet bloc whose recent defunding has sparked outrage in academic circles counts among its alumni the current U.S. ambassador to Russia as well two former secretaries of state.

Michael McFaul, the current U.S. envoy to Russia, conducted postdoctoral research in the early 1990s using a grant from the U.S. Department of State's Title VIII program, according to his resume posted on the website of Stanford University, where he previously taught political science.

Other alumni of programs funded by Title VIII include former U.S. secretaries of state Madeleine Albright and Condoleezza Rice, according to a publicly available Department of State presentation from 2011 and congressional testimony from James Collins, a former U.S. ambassador to Russia under President Bill Clinton.

A Department of State official said this week that it had defunded the program for the 2013 fiscal year due to budgetary pressures, a freeze that academics and former diplomats say could have a detrimental impact on U.S. policy in Russia, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

McFaul could not immediately be reached Friday for comment on Title VIII's defunding or his own experience with the program.

Collins said in his March 2012 congressional testimony that the program had "thousands of alumni in both academia and government" and "undeniable benefits for the practical crafting and conduct of foreign assistance programs in the region."

"We need only look at the [role] this region played as we pursued our goals in Afghanistan, Georgia, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, or Ukraine to validate the need for effective research and analysis that assure our policymakers the best information and understanding available as they craft our approaches to this region and its nations," Collins said.

Title VIII proponents argue that the modest funding level for the program — around \$3.5 million last year, according to one U.S. scholarly society — is a bargain for the advanced research and language training it yields. They say the sums constitute a pittance in the context of the federal budget but are a crucial lifeline for scholars.

The Title VIII program was established in 1983 under late U.S. President Ronald Reagan in a push to build the nation's reserves of experts on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

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