



**Colombia®**  
Challenge your knowledge

# **INBOUND MOBILITY**

## **OF US STUDENTS TO COLOMBIA:**

### **CCYK® REPORT**

**May, 2016**

**Colombia**



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The opinions expressed by the authors do not  
necessarily reflect the official position of CCYK  
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# **INBOUND MOBILITY**

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## Foreword

Colombia is a country that has recently been regarded as a successful and emerging nation, given its efforts for social, economic, political and educational consolidation. The world is anticipating to hear news of the solution to an armed internal conflict which has been raging for over six decades; this conflict has undoubtedly impacted all stakeholders in the society, and the damages caused are considered irreparable by many.

In addition, the Colombian civil society is also looking forward to the successful conclusion of a tragic story that has left a country with sadness and grief – nonetheless a hopeful one. The role of those who may be involved in rebuilding the spirit of this nation lies in the very foundations of illusion, and – date I say – education.

In the late 80s and subsequent decades, Colombia underwent the most difficult times in its history. The perfect storm of scourges possible for any society caused a war with unfathomable atrocities. Thus, the armed conflict in Colombia is a nefarious recipe which combines the confrontation between illegal groups, soldiers and citizens, whilst the international community witnessed in befuddlement the downfall of a democracy.

The consequences of this war have scarred the country and the world itself, but even more those who have suffered it. Unfortunately, the conflict also brought along international stigmatization, associated with hostilities caused by the global problem of drugs and violence in urban and rural areas. Migration of people who wanted to escape this war, kidnappings of nationals and foreigners and the strengthening of drug trafficking led some nations to – in a sovereign and respectable act – issue travel warnings for Colombia, with order to counter the problem. This is our world; a place where bias overwhelms perception and moves away from the objective reality when attempting to solve the conflicts of humankind.

On the other hand, there are people, organizations and agencies in Colombia looking for an opportunity to tell their testimony and provide another perspective – but above all to change their story. In this regard, Colombia is currently preparing to introduce a change for the good of its people. A nation can change its image before the world through memory and truth, but this chance depends on the helpful hand and the impartial view of those who can come together in kindness and faith to rebuild justice, the common good, legality, citizenship and the culture of peace.

To this effect, several Colombian universities are traveling the world and telling a new reality of the country, in order to recover our image and counter the negative effect of the perceptions associated with its historical reality. Our common challenge is to present the portrait of a new country to the international community; a new country which does not try to conceal its misfortunes, a country that has changed and made progress – where the commitment to its development lies largely in the opportunities emerging from its education system.

In light of the foregoing, the group of Colombian accredited universities which are members of the Colombia - Challenge Your Knowledge (CCYK®) network decidedly participated in a survey – based research. These Member Universities exchanged information in relation to academic mobility patterns and security-related adverse situations (incidents) with US students in Colombia in the 2011-2015 period.

Therefore, we would like to present this report on inbound mobility from the United States to Colombia, seeking to provide a different look regarding a particular occurrence in the last five years. Thus, we invite those who have only heard one side of the story to see another Colombia; i.e. to analyze Colombia from an objective stance. This report seeks chiefly to present Colombia as a potential destination for international academic activities.

Giovanni Anzola-Pardo



# Contextualization of the report



The results presented herein gather the responses obtained after the administration of a survey titled Open Campus Report on the Inbound Mobility of US Students to Colombia, with 24 universities from the CCYK Network. This survey was conducted during March and April, 2016.

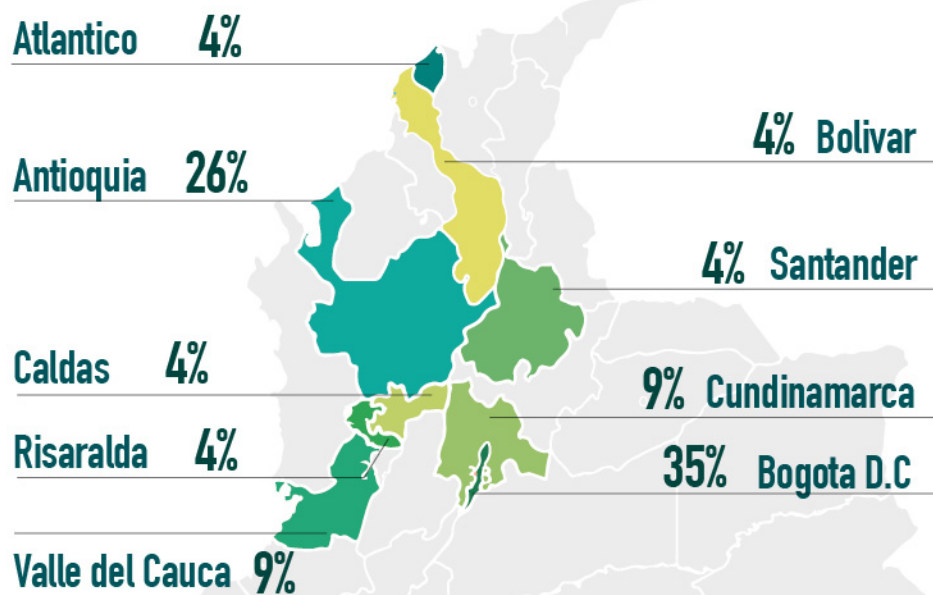
Following are the most important categories of this instrument:

- Geographical location of the institution (region, department and city)
- Type of institution
- Mobility of students from the US by region
- Trends in Mobility to Colombia
- Costs associated with mobility
- Security incidents and their modalities

Additionally, it is noteworthy that the Fulbright Colombia Commission provided important data regarding students from the United States in the programs under their coordination; for this reason, there will be a specific section herein for the Fulbright Colombia Commission.

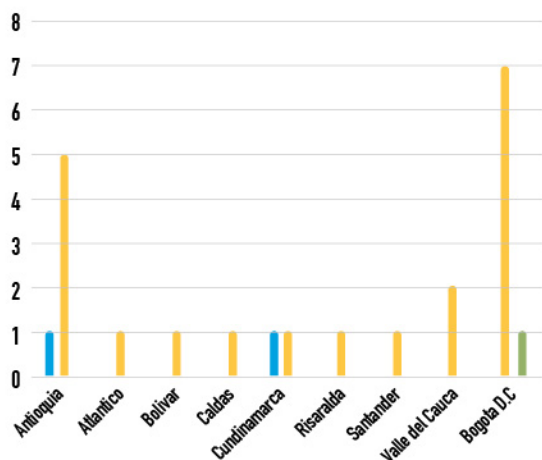
Of the 24 higher education institutions in the network, 23 universities (i.e. 16 private and 7 public institutions) responded to the survey. This provides a 95% sample confidence calculation according to Raosoft®. The instrument was previously validated with academic mobility officials, and the responses were statistically analyzed and cross-referenced for the purposes of this document.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of HEI respondents according to their location in the country.



#### Institutions by region vs. Type of Institution

Technical school University Other



#### Institutions by region vs. Legal Status

Other Private Public

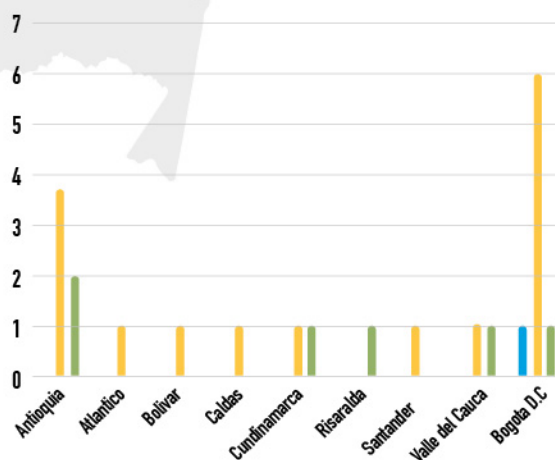


Figure 1. Distribution of HEI according to their location in the country.

# Context of Student Academic Mobility in CCYK®

## Partner Higher Education Institutions



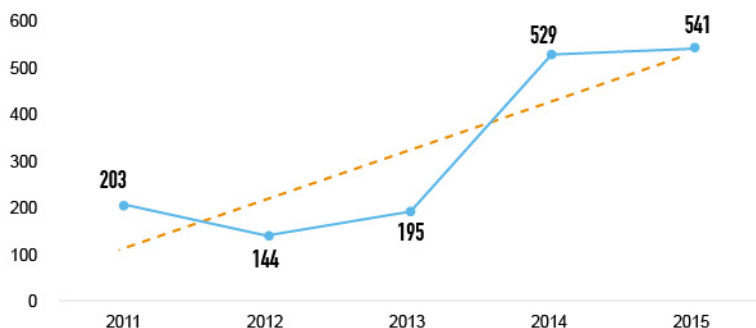
The mobility of foreigners into Colombia has had a significant increase in recent years. The improvement of security conditions, the low cost of living, exchange rates, the visa exemption policy for entry into the country, and cultural wealth, are some of the reasons for this growth. According to Migración Colombia's 2014 Annual Statistical Bulletin, the country increased foreign participation by 36% during the 2010-2014 period. The United States was the country with the highest number of entries to Colombia (376,015 in 2014), mainly in the categories of tourism and temporary visitor<sup>1</sup>.

As for student academic mobility, according to the 2015 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, which explains that Latin America and the Caribbean was the fastest growing region for students from the United States. This region increased by 70% during the 2013-2014 period. This behavior reflects the strategic impact of government actions to encourage student academic mobility, such as the 100,000 Strong in the Americas program -a public-private partnership led by the US State Department, Nafsa, Partners of the Americas and, in the particular case of Colombia, with the strong support of the U.S. Embassy.

In accordance with the results of the survey titled Open Campus Report on the Inbound Mobility of US Students to Colombia (2016), student mobility showed a significant increase during the 2011-2015 period, as shown in Figure 2.

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<sup>1</sup> Temporary visitor visa is granted to foreigners who wish to enter the country for over 180 days to conduct research activities, practicums, internships, academic programs with or without grants, under a labor contract or a contract for provision of services, as a cooperating member or as a volunteer, inter alia. For more information, please visit the following website: [http://www.cancilleria.gov.co/tramites\\_servicios/visas/clases](http://www.cancilleria.gov.co/tramites_servicios/visas/clases)



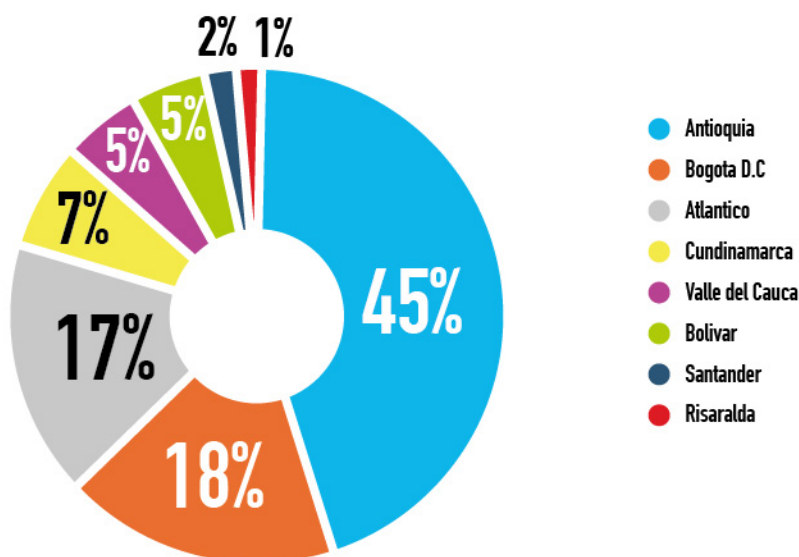
**Figure 2.** Total Students coming from the US (2011-2015). CCYK Universities

During the 2011-2015 period, 1,612 students from the United States pursued academic activities in Colombia. It is noteworthy that the number of students increased by 171%, particularly in the years 2013 y 2014. Hence, Figure 1 shows how High-Quality Accredited and CCYK® Member Higher Education Institutions have made progress in the implementation of strategies to promote academic training activities in Colombia<sup>2</sup> on account of the exponential growth rate.

In regards to the flow of students specified by Department, Antioquia accounts for 45% of US students, out of the total number for the 2011-2015 period, followed by Bogotá D. C., and Atlántico Department with 18% and 17% respectively (Figure 3). It is important to mention that Migración Colombia's 2014 Annual Statistical Bulletin also identifies the latter as the three Departments with predominant foreign preference.

<sup>2</sup> Since the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund was launched, five (5) CCYK Network Member Higher Education Institutions in Colombia have been awarded the grant. i. e. EAFIT, Universidad de La Salle, Universidad de La Sabana, Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga and Universidad del Norte.





**Figure 3.** Total students by region over the past 5 years (2011-2015)

In addition, the most frequent trends in academic mobility include internships, short courses, academic semesters, Spanish courses for foreigners and volunteering programs. As a matter of fact, the increase in the number of students enrolled in short courses has turned the Latin American and the Caribbean region into a leader for this type of applied learning activities (Open Doors Report, 2015: 21).

In short, the outlook for US academic mobility shows that students have increasingly turned their attention to Colombia.

# Medellin — moving forward as an example for Colombia



Without undermining other beautiful and big cities that have made progress in their proposal for academic collaboration (as evidenced in the data), the progress of Medellin as an academic destination in general – and as a benchmark for learning Spanish in particular – is exceptional. The growing group of American students coming to Medellin could be classified into three types: families with dual (Colombian-American) nationality; young adult professionals who are interested in exploring the city and the country – actually bringing ideas to develop economic activities in the city; and older adults – generally retirees – who decide to settle in the city of Medellin given its excellent living conditions: good utilities, good transportation, a pleasant climate and friendly people.

Along this line of thought, it is worth mentioning that families with dual nationality have the advantage of finding a rich supply of schools with high academic standards in Medellin. In addition, Americans who seek to strengthen their communication skills in Spanish have been attracted by the quality of the language courses offered in the city. For this reason, the demand for duration of these courses has gone from 2 - 3 months a few years ago, to longer sojourns of 8 to 12 months currently. It can be seen that a city which was formerly sinking in the pessimism of violence is currently becoming one of the main drivers of academic exchange with the United States<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The authors acknowledge Miguel Angel Betancour, of Pontificia Universidad Bolivariana, for his contributions in this paragraph.

# Living Costs Associated with Student Academic Mobility



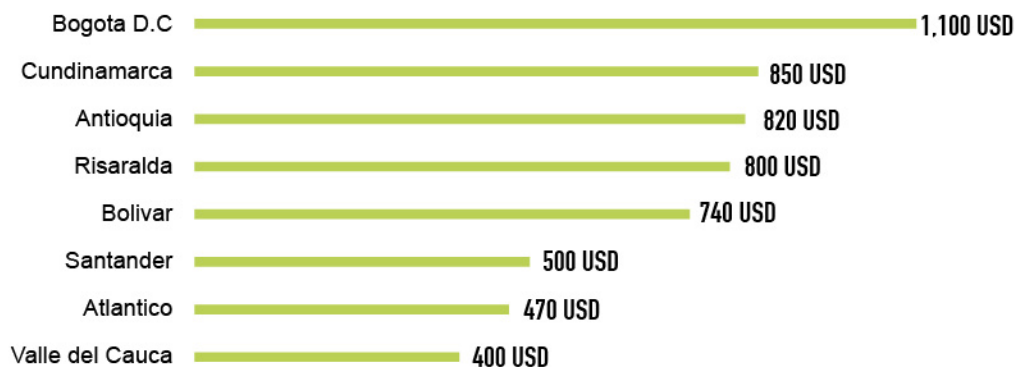
One factor that has helped to increase academic mobility is the low cost of living. The total average monthly expenditure of an American student to cover their living costs during their academic stay is of USD 740. Table 1 below shows a detailed description of the costs borne by students, broken down into the following categories:

CATEGORY	COST IN USD
Accommodation	290
Transportation	80
Meals	160
Medical Insurance	110
Sundry expenses	100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>740</b>



**Table 1.** Living costs in Colombia for foreign students, per category

Analyzing living costs per department, Bogotá D. C., concentrates the highest cost followed by Cundinamarca, Antioquia and Risaralda, as shown in Figure 4.



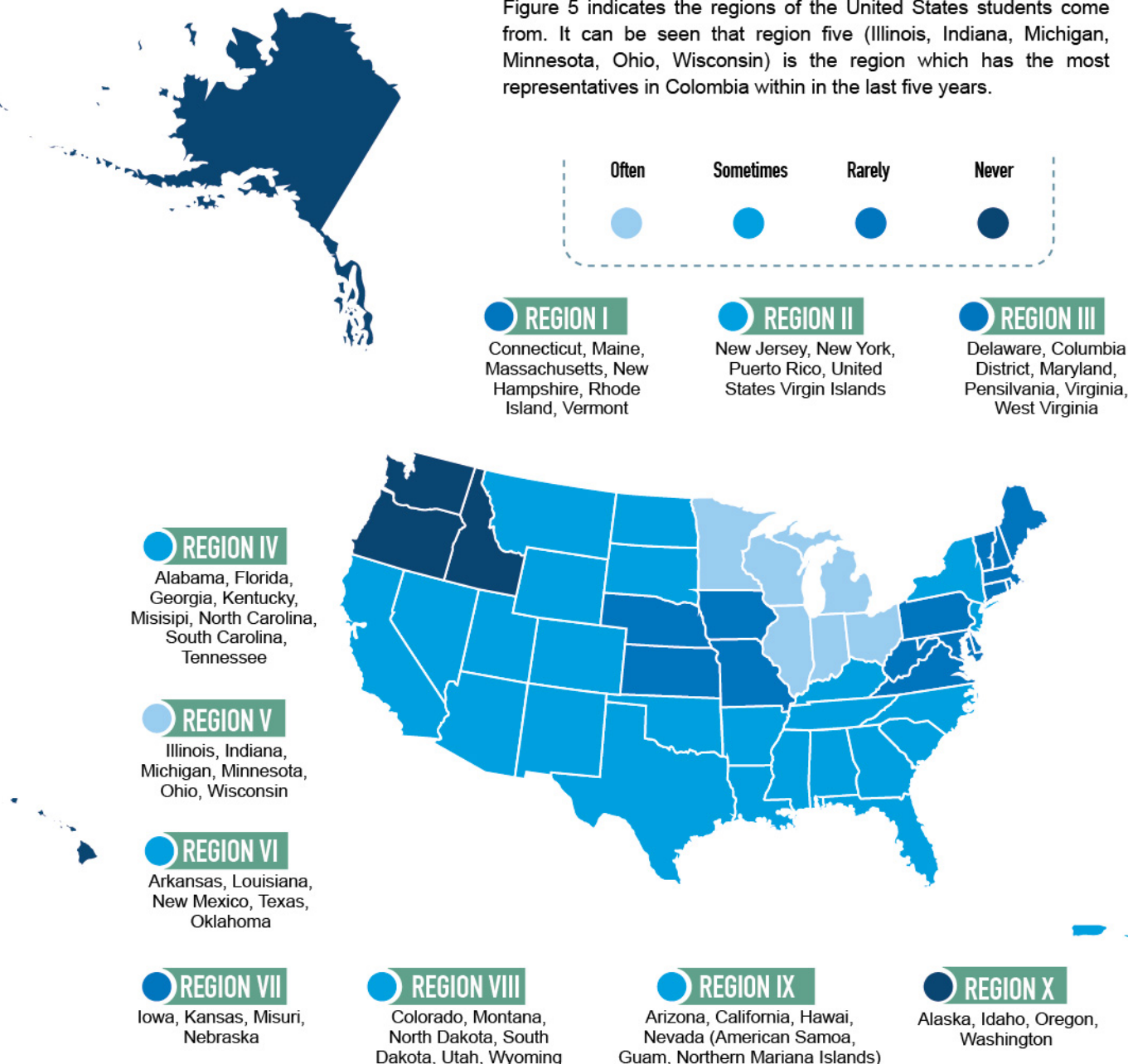
*Figure 4.* Average monthly cost of living per region<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The currency exchange ratio was calculated on the May 2016 average, i.e. COP 3,000 = USD 1.



# Frequency of students from the US.

Figure 5 indicates the regions of the United States students come from. It can be seen that region five (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin) is the region which has the most representatives in Colombia within in the last five years.



**Figure 5.** Frequency where students from the US come from.



# Travel warnings for Colombia



Overcoming the negative image of Colombia is definitely a common goal pursued by different public and private institutions in the country. This great effort has helped change the perception people have about Colombia in some regions of the world. Below is a list of several European countries<sup>5</sup> which do not report a travel warning for Colombia. We include countries that present general information, but do not issue any specific recommendations to not visit the country<sup>6</sup>.

COUNTRY	TRAVEL WARNING	SOURCE
Austria	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria
Belgium***	No	Service of Foreign Affairs of Belgium
Czech Republic	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic
Denmark	No	Danish Foreign Service
Estonia	No	Ministry of International Relations
Finland***	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland
France	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France
Germany	No	Service of Foreign Affairs of Germany
Iceland**	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iceland
Ireland***	No	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland

<sup>5</sup> The reference to the European countries responds to the economic, political and cultural similarities with the United States.

<sup>6</sup> The authors thank Professor Tumbas Kastalag, of Universidad Externado de Colombia, for his contributions in the graph, as well as Travel Warning info.

COUNTRY	TRAVEL WARNING	SOURCE
Italy	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
Luxembourg	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg
Netherlands***	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
Norway	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway
Sweden	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden
Switzerland***	No	Federal Department of International Relations of Switzerland
United Kingdom	No	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom

Tabla 2. Travel warning from Europe to Colombia

\*\* Iceland has no travel warning for Colombia. In lieu thereof, reference is made to the travel warnings from Denmark, Sweden, Norway, UK, Germany, France, Belgium, Australia and Canada.

\*\*\* The Ministry of Foreign Affairs does not have a travel warning. Instead, it contains a list of all countries in the world with advice for visitors.

Importantly, the change in the perception towards Colombia is also based on the transformation that the country has undergone, which has led to substantial improvements to the quality of life of Colombians. Below is an overview of the progress that has been made in academic and public safety areas.

# COLOMBIA:

A destination of quality education which has become increasingly attractive



The evolution of Colombia in recent years has had a positive impact on the improvement in the quality of higher education in the country. According to the 2016 Higher Education System Strength Rankings QS by the firm Quacquarelli Symonds – which measures the strength of education systems in the world – Colombia is regarded as a rising protagonist in Latin America, and ranks in prominent positions that invite the country to continue to consolidate strengths, respond to challenges and increase attention to all opportunities for improvement.

Colombia ranks 34th worldwide and 5th in Latin America. Colombia's ranking in the various factors analyzed are as follows:

## Economic context

This factor measures the impact of investment in higher education on the quality of the system.

Colombia ranks 19th in the world and 3rd in Latin America.

## System Strength

This aspect assesses the position of the country's universities within the QS Ranking, and Colombia ranks 36th.

## Access

This criterion determines the possibilities of a Colombian university student to be admitted at an elite university. The country ranked 33rd globally, and 4th in Latin America.

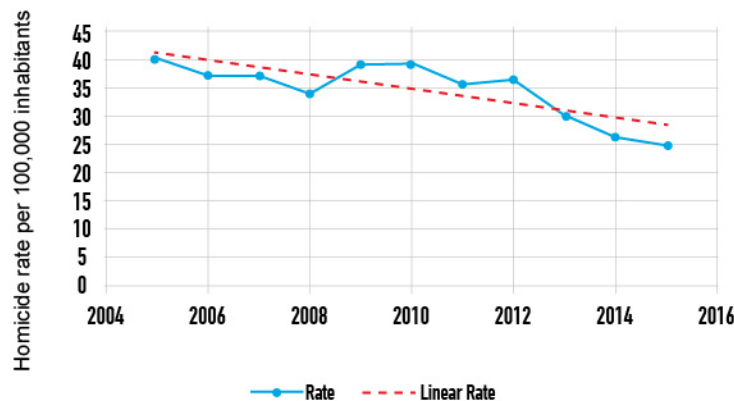
### Flagship Institution

This category evaluates the performance of the best universities located in the general ranking. Colombia ranks 39th worldwide.

While Colombia has made progress in relation to the quality of higher education – as shown in the results of the aforementioned study and the significant increase in student mobility – there still remains an imaginary of violence which prevents potential visitors from benefiting from academic opportunities in Colombia. In this regard we present a brief analysis of the improvements the country has had in terms of security.

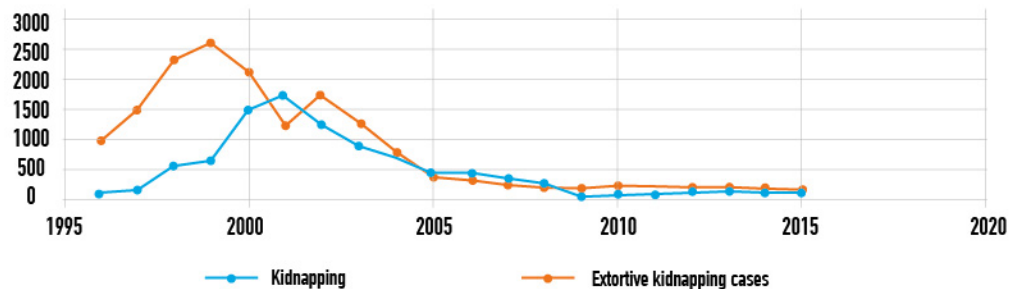
### Improved public security in Colombia

Colombia is no longer the country it used to be back in the nineties. The sharp downward trend in absolute figures and crime rates (Forensics Institute, 2014) account for this progressive transformation of the country into a determinedly peaceful society. In this sense, there has been an outstanding reduction in homicide rates from 40 to 25 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants between 2005 and 2015 (respectively), as shown in Figure 6.



**Figure 6.** Homicide cases and rates per 100,000 population – Colombia, 2014-2015. Behavior of homicide in Colombia 2014, by the Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, 2015, Forensics, 16 (1), 563 and Achievements of the Defense and Security Policy - All for a New Country (Logros de la Política de Defensa y Seguridad - Todos por un Nuevo País). Ministry of National Defense, 2016.

In addition to the above, the reduction of kidnappings in Colombia has been an important tool for improving the security of residents and visitors. The efforts of the Colombian authorities allowed the reduction of this type of crime from 57 cases of kidnapping to foreigners in 1999 to 6 cases in 2014. Thus, the policies to recover public safety managed to displace the crime of kidnapping far away from the big urban centers to remote rural areas where the work to retrieve the rule of law continues. Comparatively speaking, one is nine times more likely to suffer a plane crash, and 64 times more likely to suffer a car accident, than to be kidnapped in Colombia. Figure 7 below shows the significant improvement of the country in addressing this issue, which has a strong correlation with the international public opinion in terms of perceived security in Colombia.



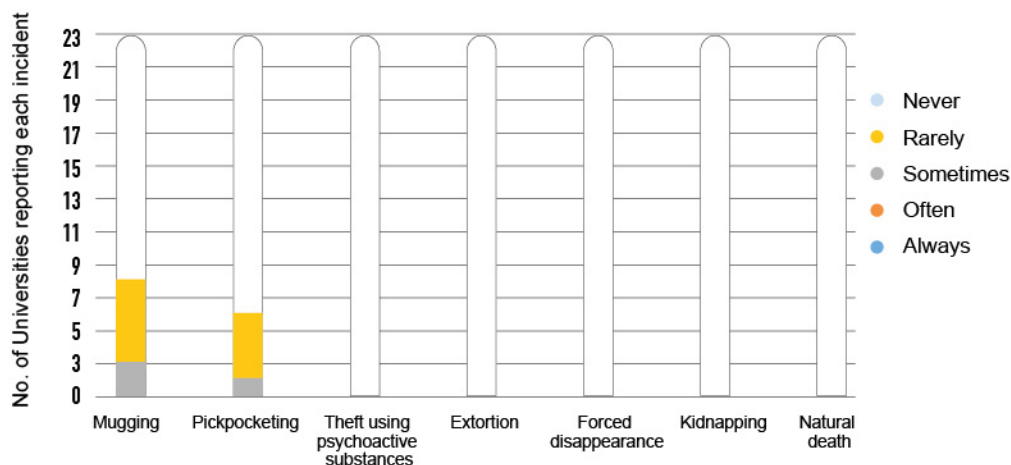
**Figure 7.** Behavior of kidnappings in Colombia. Based on data from the Ministry of National Defense (2016)



# Security incidents associated with student academic mobility



Contrary to what might be perceived internationally in matters of security of foreigners, the experience of academic mobility of students from the United States into Colombia is quite positive. The data in this report confirm that students from the United States who have come to perform studies within the last 5 years have not had unusual incidents involving security issues. Similarly, the incidents which have occurred are the type of incidents which can occur in any large city in the world, as shown in Figure 8.



**Figure 8.** Security issues of US students in Colombian CCYK® Universities

The respondent Universities reported no incidents in the categories of theft under psychoactive substances, extortion, forced disappearance, kidnapping and natural death. Moreover, the Pickpocketing category is reported as happening frequently by one of the universities; four universities stated that pickpocketing is an event that happens rarely, and eleven universities said it had never happened. Finally the mugging category was reported by three universities as being an event that occurs sometimes, whereas five universities stated it rarely happens, and nine institutions report that mugging has never happened.

# A long-standing collaboration — Fulbright Colombia



Security conditions in Colombia have changed since the early 2000s. This has had a positive impact on the recommendations of the Embassy of the United States for visitors from said country. In addition, new partnerships have been created between the United States and Colombian universities. Consequently the Fulbright Commission in Colombia has been providing grants for research and teaching for six decades, thereby promoting internationalization of Colombian higher education through exchange programs with faculty members, doctoral researchers, graduate students and English teaching assistants.

The trend of Fulbright scholarships in the country has had two fundamental changes in the recent years. Firstly, research and teaching scholarships for Colombians increased more than did graduate fellowships. Secondly, scholarships for Americans increased more than did scholarships for Colombians. The two changes above allow us to think that Colombia continues to consolidate as a favorite destination for research in the region, and as fertile soil for international academic cooperation.

Fulbright reached its record number of scholarships for Americans in 2016, going from fifty in the previous year over 100 today. Of these, just over half are teaching English assistants, another 40% are faculty members and researchers with doctorates, and the remaining 10% is doctoral students. Fostering the arrival of more American researchers, faculty members and doctoral students to higher education institutions in Colombia will continue to be one of the main objectives of the Fulbright Commission in Colombia, as the Fulbright Commission is fully convinced of the enormous impact that these exchanges have on the quality of education in Colombia<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> The authors thank Adriana Gaviria Duque Executive Director of Fulbright Colombia, for her contributions in the graph.



This report sheds light on a roadmap for educational collaboration, based on the academic exercise of mobility to and from Colombia. Student mobilization has meant an important step towards the consolidation of Colombia as an increasingly attractive destination for studies. This positive development is mainly due to two factors: the improvement of public security and the phenomenon of Colombia as an emergent protagonist in the academic stage, faced with competition and cooperation of the educational systems that transform societies in an assertive fashion.

It must be reiterated that Colombian universities must continue aiming their efforts to create quality study programs which are attractive to students from the United States. In the same vein, this strategy can be built based on professors' agendas in order to implement Faculty-led programs, and drive the modality of short term courses as well.

Since the student population attending universities in the United States also comes from different parts of the world (mostly Asia), it is necessary to work hand in hand with universities and the national government in order to ease visa requirements - perhaps through a special category for international students coming to the country.

Education should be above and beyond geopolitical interests, with a zest for finding truth, justice and the common good. Universities allow the world to be dynamic, and present solutions to problems emerging from academic discussion and scientific debate. Only through the exchange of ideas, the flow of people and the generation of opportunities, will the world be a better place.

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Colombia -Challenge Your Knowledge® (CCYK) is a network of Institutions of Higher Education with High Quality Accreditation in Colombia designed to promote the development of academic internationalization of the country within the national and international arena. CCYK seeks to position itself as one of the main contributors to the discussions regarding the Academic Development of the country, and to strengthening the substantive functions of Higher Education in the Research, Extension, and Teaching areas. CCYK is composed by:

- Colegio Mayor de Nuestra Señora del Rosario
- Instituto Tecnológico Metropolitano
- Pontificia Universidad Javeriana
- Universidad Autónoma de Bucaramanga
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