



Organization of American States

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Results of a Survey to Rowe Fund Ex-beneficiaries

For sixty years, the Rowe Fund has fulfilled the vision of Dr. Rowe by helping citizens from Latin America and Caribbean OAS member countries finance their higher education in universities across the United States by strengthening the hemisphere's democratic institution, imbuing a sense of social justice, increasing upward mobility in its citizens, and contributing to the advancement of society.

The Rowe Fund Secretariat successfully carried out a survey from May to December of 2007; which was targeted to a group of 603 of Rowe Fund loans ex-beneficiaries. Out of the 603 surveys submitted, 91 ex-beneficiaries or 15% of the total sample completed the survey.

The survey was comprised of four categories: general student information, student work experience, financial aid, and services provided by the Fund to students. Many ex-beneficiaries took the opportunity to thank the Rowe Fund for their services provided while studying in the U.S. and sent recommendations to improve our operations.

FAST FACTS:

A. GENERAL STUDENT INFORMATION

- ✚ Of the ex-beneficiaries who responded to the survey, 49.5% returned to their countries of origin and 50.5% were, at the time, residing outside of their home countries; living either in the United States, other OAS member countries, or other nations around the world.
- ✚ The main reasons for those students who did not return to their home countries were: new employment opportunities (22.0%), personal and professional success (19.0%), continuing their education (11.0%), and adverse economic conditions and violence in their countries (4.0%). The remaining 44.0% did not provide the Rowe Fund with relevant information related to this topic.
- ✚ 80.2% obtained a Masters' degree, followed by a Doctorate (13.2%), and Bachelors' degree (6.6%).
- ✚ The primarily field of study was Business Management (20.9%), followed by a field in Sciences (12.1%), Law (12.0%) and Engineering (11.0%). The remaining, 44.0% corresponds to all other areas of study with lower participation rates.
- ✚ Of the 91 beneficiaries who responded to the survey, only one did not complete his/her studies in the United States for personal reasons.

B. STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

- ✚ 92.3% of participants were employed at the time the survey was conducted.
- ✚ Of those students who were employed:
 - 76.9% found jobs in less than six months
 - 53.9% have a direct or close relation between their studies in the United States and their current employment positions.
- ✚ Most respondents have affirmed that their experiences abroad allowed them to make a difference in their home nations and throughout the hemisphere.

From this vantage point, Rowe Fund loans serves as a very useful tool for its beneficiaries since the loans, are a decisive source of financial aid for students to be able to complete their studies. Thus, the beneficiaries have reported that having a degree from an US university has allowed them to become more competitive in the labor market.

C. FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

- ✚ The Rowe Fund loans are considered a complementary form of financial aid with the purpose of supplementing other financial resources. Bearing this in mind, 82.4% of ex-beneficiaries had other sources of financing besides personal savings. Of those who said that they had other sources of financing:
 - 48.8% received scholarships and fellowships
 - 23.1 were employed in our outside the U.S.
 - 28.1 had private loans with banks or other student loan programs

D. SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ROWE FUND

- ✚ The overall index of the satisfaction felt ex-beneficiaries with the services provided by the Rowe Fund was good (43.0%) followed by acceptable (24.0%) and lastly excellent (33.0%).
- ✚ Around 56.0% of the respondents learned about the existence of the Rowe Fund program via word of mouth, mostly from a friend or relative who had benefited from the Fund. 16.1% learned about the program through the Internet, while 20.5% did through institutions such as universities in and outside the US, other student loan programs, through ministers of education, among others. The remaining 7.5 % did not specify how they learned about the Rowe Fund program.
- ✚ 39.6% of respondents agreed that it was very difficult to find a guarantor in order to apply for a Rowe Fund loan.
- ✚ 23% of the respondents thanked the Rowe Fund for the services and financial aid the Fund provided them during the completion of their studies in the United States.

EX-BENEFICIARIES RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE ROWE FUND:

In order to improve the services provided by the Rowe Fund, one must recognize ones strengths and weaknesses, and continue to learn from the experiences of the students we serve. Thus, we have asked Rowe Fund ex-beneficiaries to provide the Fund with suggestions. The following are their recommendations:

- ❖ Increase the loan amount granted by the Rowe Fund and the length of repayment time; even if that means adding an interest charge.
- ❖ Continuously promote the Rowe Fund's services. Since most of the Rowe Fund ex-beneficiaries heard about this financial aid opportunity through other loan recipients, relatives or friends, it is important to reinforce and extend our promotional efforts through the internet, students, universities, and educational credit institutions in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean. They suggested developing a new marketing strategy to make the services of the Fund more well-known.
- ❖ Since the most difficult obstacle to overcome during the application process was obtaining a US citizen or resident willing to act as a guarantor, many of Rowe Fund ex-beneficiaries suggested developing alternative methods to guaranty loans.
- ❖ Search for additional payment options. In particular, some ex-beneficiaries complained about the difficulty of making payments once they have returned to their country of origin.
- ❖ Reduce unnecessary paperwork during the loan application process.

*"Education is the single greatest force for equality and social justice in the world [...]
America's mission in this new century must be to welcome more foreign students to our nation"*
(Condoleezza Rice opening remarks at the signing ceremony for U.S.-Chile
equal opportunity scholarship program).

Thank you notes from Ex-beneficiaries:

"I am extremely grateful to the Rowe Fund for the assistance provided towards completion of my Master's degree which made possible for me to jump significantly as a professional and also as a human being."

Patricio Vivero from Ecuador
University of Illinois
Masters in Economics

"I had an excellent experience with the Rowe Fund and its personnel were very helpful and efficient."

Claudia Solis from Peru
Florida International University
Masters in Journalism

"My studies in the US opened several opportunities in my career. I am very grateful for the financial aid the Rowe Fund granted me. Thank you."

Elizabeth Santalla-Vargas from Bolivia
University of San Francisco
Masters in Law, LLM

"I asked a loan from the Rowe fund to conduct deontological treatment not contemplated by my insurance. It is in this sort of situation that Rowe was extremely helpful to me."

Almira Hoogesteyn from Venezuela
Cornell University
Doctorate in Zoology

“For me it was a big opportunity, and I wish to have had the information in advance because not having a full scholarship was a big barrier to decide to leave my job and start studying again in the US.”

Francisco Martinez from Colombia
Florida International University
Masters in International Business Administration

“My experience with the LEO S. Rowe Fund was very good. I am very grateful for their assistance that allowed me to complete my degree in the US. I also feel very proud to have repaid every cent of this loan, as I had committed to repay it!”

Hector Emilio Suazo from Honduras
Cornell University
Masters in International Agriculture and Rural
Development

“Always thankful for your assistance!”

Alberto De Losada from Peru
University of Maryland
Masters in Business Administration

“I can not stop thanking the Rowe Fund for the loan granted to me. If I knew about this opportunity earlier, I would have been more positive in pursuing my studies in the US.”

Jaime Yumiseva from Ecuador
University of Miami
Masters in International Business Administration

“I found the Leo S. Rowe Fund administrators very understanding in dealing with loan related matters. Also, the monthly payment amount, though reasonable by some standards, were a little challenging to meet at times. The help received was timely and greatly appreciated.”

Alexander Isaacs from Guyana
Loma Linda University
Masters in Public Health

“I think it is a great loan and it really helped me during college.”

Mariano Tovar from Peru
St. Mary's University
Bachelors in Engineering

“I was extremely grateful for the assistance and your staff was very helpful.”

Garret D'Aguilar from Jamaica
Georgia State University
Masters in Business Administration

“I was lucky to have saved money to go to the US and start my studies before getting the loan. However, I think that many people do not have the same luck and don't know about the Fund.”

Ronivaldo Da Silva from Brasil
Carson Newman College
Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language

“It is an excellent service, and could provide a decisive factor to people who want to study in US but don't have sufficient funds available.”

Rodrigo Hernandez from Colombia
Oklahoma City University
Masters in Business Administration

“Just a big thank you for all your help.”

Maria Fernanda Hidalgo from Ecuador
International College of Hospitality Management
Associate in Hospitality Management

“My school provided me with an academic scholarship but it did not cover the total tuition expenses. It would have been very useful to know about the Rowe Fund immediately, perhaps through the school's financial aid office.”

Lara Gomez from Peru
Carnegie Mellon University
Masters in Public Policy and Management

“The Rowe Fund helped me to finish my Ph.D. I hope it can continue helping other students.”

Antonio Benetti from Brasil
Cornell University
Doctorate in Environmental Engineering

“The loan was instrumental in allowing me to finalize my studies. I have recommended the program to others who end up receiving the loan and it has been a great help to them. I also know that many procedures have been improved.”

Jorge Inchauste from Bolivia
Georgetown University
Masters in Law, LLM