

Berlin Program 25th Anniversary Alumni Survey

SURVEY REPORT



Berlin Program Anniversary Alumni Survey 2011

As 2011 marked the 25th anniversary of the Berlin Program, it seemed a good occasion to take stock. In May 2011 Berlin Program Alumni were invited to take part in an online survey designed to measure career paths, evaluate the impact of the Berlin Program fellowship and the strength of the program design, track the use of academic resources during the fellowship period and the connectedness of alumni with academic institutions in Berlin/Germany as well as the productiveness of the alumni network. The survey consisted of 34 questions and was sent to 248 alumni. We received 105 completed questionnaires, a fantastic response rate of 43%. We want to thank all those who took the time to share their thoughts.

Key Findings: The majority of respondents (79%) now teach and complete research at universities and colleges in the US, Canada and beyond. The overwhelming majority of respondents rated the opportunity provided by the fellowship to be highly beneficial for their professional life. The lasting connections with German academic institutions - both with Berlin universities and research institutes such as the WZB, the ZZF, the DIW, and Max-Planck institutes - reported by 68% of the respondents often resulted in cooperation or joint publications. The productive and enduring interaction of respondents with other Berlin Program Fellows even beyond their research stay is another facet of the program's impact. Many respondents rated the program design, with its cohort structure, interdisciplinary research colloquium and generous funding a deciding factor in choosing the program over other offers. Almost all respondents (91%) wished to remain connected with the program and receive a semi-annual newsletter.

Career Paths: The majority of respondents (79%) are employed in academia, some are employed in cultural institutions (6%) and/or government (6%), few in administration (3%), and business (2%). Of the respondents working in academia 11% are tenured professors, 22% are associate professors, 32% are assistant professors, 9% are lecturers and 27% have other professional titles.

Overall Fellowship Experience: More than two thirds of respondents (69%) considered the impact of the Berlin Program fellowship on their professional lives to be very positive, 28% quite positive, and 3% found that it had no impact. None reported a negative impact. Questioned about the advantages of the Berlin Program fellowship, a majority of respondents (56%) saw the cohort structure of the program, with its colloquium as a highly productive program feature. Significant numbers (30%) saw the generous funding, in particular the travel funds, the location, the institutional affiliation and support the program provided to be great advantages.

Publications: The overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) reported that the Berlin Program Fellowship supported one or more of their publications. The 196 publications entered consist of 39 monographs, 74 articles in refereed journals, 64 articles in edited volumes and 19 other publications. Many fellows chose to report their publications with bibliographical information. The program greatly appreciates their extra effort!

Institutional Connectedness: Questioned about the connections they established during their fellowship period, 68% of the respondents said they made lasting connections with academic institutions in Berlin, and 34% indicated that these contacts resulted in cooperation and joint publications. Asked to evaluate their contact with other Fellows, 84% reported lasting connections



with other Fellows they met in Berlin, and 28% reported cooperation with Fellows in Berlin or joint publications after their research stay.

The Berlin Program and other Fellowship Programs: Berlin Program Alumni reported extensive experience with other fellowship programs either as recipients (94%), reviewers/advisors (52%), or in another capacity (20%). A substantial number of respondents (45%) decided to choose the Berlin Program over other offers. The deciding factors listed included the program's generous funding, the fellows' community and the support and facilities the program provides.

Transatlantic Academic Exchange: Asked to reflect on the broader issue of transatlantic academic exchange, half (49%) of the respondents thought the program's contribution to transatlantic academic exchange to be very important, while 41% considered it to be quite important. Asked about the challenges to that exchange, a large number of respondents (36%) saw the cutbacks at U.S. universities as a major challenge. Other challenges noted by 25% of the respondents were the different academic systems and cultures. The dwindling American interest in Germany and Europe was listed by 11% of the respondents as a hurdle in transatlantic academic exchange.

Dissatisfaction with the Berlin Program: Asked to voice their criticism about the program, some respondents (7%) expressed disappointment over difficulties gaining closer contact to German scholars (both Professors and Ph.D. students) and institutions. Some (8%) considered the reputation of the program to be less prestigious than other programs, few (6%) found its structure to be too rigid, (6%) felt that the colloquium interfered with research trips and few (5%) would have liked a higher stipend.

Alumni Events and Communication: Since 2004, the Berlin Program has hosted ten alumni events. 33% of the respondents reported that they have attended a Berlin Program Alumni event and 91% of the respondents stated that they would like to receive a semi-annual newsletter.

Next Steps: Although we are extremely pleased to find impressive career paths, high levels of productiveness of the fellowship and overwhelming satisfaction with the Berlin Program, the survey also allowed us to identify areas of improvement. As part of our effort to intensify our communication, a newsletter will be sent to all Berlin Program Alumni twice a year. The first newsletter was sent in mid-September 2011.

In order to strengthen the academic exchange with Berlin Program Alumni, we have scheduled two alumni events for 2012. In June 2012 a Berlin Program Summer Workshop will address the topic *German Studies Between the Global and the Local*. At this year's annual GSA conference in October 2012 our Berlin Program Alumni Panel will discuss population policies under the topic *A New Era of German Bevölkerungspolitik?*

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