

# The History of International Education Associates

International Education Associates, Inc. was founded and registered in Maryland as an “S” corporation in September 1987, with France J. Pruitt, Ph.D., President, Dean Pruitt, Ph.D., Senior Vice-President and Irene Hecht, Vice-President for Recruitment for Overseas Educational Institutions. By 1988, she was joined by five Associates, Dr. Stephen Arum, Dr. Sven Groenings, Dr. Richard Rosen, Dr. Irving Spitzberg, Dr. John Van De Water, in addition to Gretchen Hobbs Donaldson.

## International College of America (ICA)

From 1987 to 1990, IEA received its first contract from the Yokohama Academy, a Japanese two-year college, to establish a college in the US for Japanese women. At that time, there was a trend in Japanese higher education to look for overseas locations as there were not enough spaces in their own colleges and universities for the students who were seeking higher education, especially women. A few other companies invested money in the US. When the request came to George Mason University, they recommended IEA to them. A team was put together with educators from different fields and locations in the US and overseas and an Assistant to the President, Gretchen Hobbs Donaldson was hired to conduct the day to day operation. One important lesson learned was to have identified and developed a Japanese person for the Board.

Dr. Pruitt became the President of the College, which was named the *International College of America (ICA)*. Our team worked on several issues such as gaining accreditation from the State of Maryland, preparing a catalog, building a library collection, and working with the owners of the large compound and mansion selected by the Chairman of the Yokohama Academy, for the location of the College. The legal aspect of that purchase was mainly under the direction of the Chairman’s lawyer, and IEA worked with public relations efforts and the community surrounding the property.

Unfortunately, the project failed for a few reasons, but the most important one was the fact the Chairman had selected a large homestead / mansion in Annapolis where many former Navy personnel, who had fought the Japanese at the end of WW II, had settled and were expressing a strong concern and even objection for a Japanese college to be established in their territory. Most of the other Japanese efforts to build colleges in the US ended up as a failure as well. It may have been partly because of the difference in culture which is very wide. On the other hand, IEA helped the Yokohama Academy by establishing summer school programs for 60 young women, which turned out to be very successful under Gretchen’s leadership. Highlights of the summer programs included local Host Family and 4H housing, classes at UMBC (University of Maryland Baltimore County), and a field trip to NYC. In addition to this largest of IEA contracts

which lasted for three years, Gretchen led a number of other projects outlined in “IEA’s Move to NC” later in this history:

## **National Association for Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA): The Association for International Educators**



### **NAFSA Region VIII Outstanding Contribution to International Education of the Year Award**



EDC Chair Senem Bakar presented Dr. Pruitt with celebratory plaque, which read:

*Presented to EDC Founding Member  
Dr. France Pruitt*

*with much affection and deep appreciation  
for your unwavering support and relentless guidance  
in leading the NAFSA Embassy Dialogue Committee to success  
and for your lifelong dedication to international education*

*December 10, 2014*

Since Dr. Pruitt joined NAFSA in 1960, she held increasingly significant volunteer leadership positions to enhance NAFSA’s outreach, efficiency and professionalism, see NAFSA accomplishment outline below. In 1996, France Pruitt was a founding member of the NAFSA

Embassy Dialogue Committee (EDC). She was instrumental in identifying a large gap in international education and acted on it, which was to create a platform for U.S. higher education and foreign higher education representatives to connect with each other in the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area. France was chair over its formative years, and worked to grow the international Embassy representation on the steering committee and involvement in programming. She left a very strong legacy. France served as the EDC chair twice in the 1990s and moved to the Treasurer role when her NAFSA AU colleague, Senem Bakar, became chair in 2000. France's diverse experience and intercultural skills in international education was felt in every aspect of her engagement with the embassies. She was a strong support to NAFSA's president, John Reichard, to advocate for EDC's status to move from being a regional NAFSA entity to a national Member Interest Group (MIG) in 2011. France received the "2011 NAFSA Region VIII Outstanding Contribution to International Education of the Year Award". Nominated by Senem, this award represents international acknowledgement of her substantial and lasting influence, accomplishments and dedication to international education globally. France retired from the Treasurer position at the same time Senem stepped down from her position in February 2019. Later, Senem also was awarded the "2015 NAFSA Region VIII Outstanding Contribution to International Education of the Year Award".

The 2019 chair of NAFSA's Embassy Dialogue Committee (EDC) is Elizabeth Kumbhari, Cultural Vistas, and the treasurer/chair-elect is ShazAkram, Fulbright Association.

<https://www.nafsa.org/mig-edc>

#### **2011 Accomplishments cited for NAFSA Region VIII Outstanding Contribution to International Education of the Year Award**

Dr. France Pruitt has dedicated her life to international education. Highlights from among her numerous accomplishments include:

- Established the Foreign Student Affairs offices at **Northwestern University** and the **University of Delaware**. Co-established the Foreign Student Affairs office at **SUNY Buffalo**.
- Established the Office of International Programs and Services at **George Mason University**.
- Read proposals and applications for the **American Schools and Hospitals Abroad (ASHA) Program** of USAID.
- Founded the consulting firm **International Education Associates** in 1987; clients include the World Bank, the governments of Togo, Japan and China, the departments of Agriculture and Education, the State of New Jersey, and NAFSA.
- Read applications and interviewed students for the **Japanese English Teachers (JET) Program** for 20 years, now Japan Exchange and Teaching Program; recognized by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs during a ceremony in Tokyo to celebrate the 20th Anniversary of the JET Program.

Dr. Pruitt joined NAFSA in August 1960 and has been an active member ever since. Her leadership roles have included:

- 1960s – Member, **1964 National Conference Planning Committee**.

- 1970s – Chair, **Region X**, National Coordinator, **NAFSA Nigerian Student Concerns Committee**; chair, **NAFSA National Committee for Sub-Saharan Africa**.

- 1980s – Chair, **Region VIII**. During this time, she and the Chair of Region IX planned one of the first bi-regional conferences. In 1986, on the way to Benin, and on behalf of NAFSA, she stopped in Nigeria to negotiate financial issues dealing with their students studying in the US.

- 1990s – Founding Member and Chair, **Embassy Dialogue Committee on Education**.

In the mid-1980s, NAFSA's Executive Director John F. Reichard appointed Dr. Pruitt to a committee to work with cultural and educational attaches in Washington, DC. This committee evolved into the **NAFSA Embassy Dialogue Committee on Education**. She served as the EDC chair for a number of years and more recently as its treasurer.

In 2000, Dr. Pruitt, under contract with the Department of State, coordinated the Fall **USBT - US Based Training Program for NAFSA** to highlight / educate regarding programs that brought international students/graduates/practical training students to the US, usually for education, practical training and skills development.

In 2011, Dr. Pruitt received the **Outstanding Award for Contributions to International Education** from NAFSA Region VIII. In 2011, EDC also became a national Member Interest Group (MIG) with Dr. Pruitt's guidance.

## **Next Historical Partnerships**

From 1985 to 1987, IEA evaluated proposals for the Department of Education of the State of New Jersey.

From 1986 to 1987, IEA worked with the World Bank to plan the development of a training and fellowship program for three ministries in Benin and Togo. Dr. Pruitt visited those two countries for that endeavor.

From 1990 to 1997, IEA received a contract from another Japanese company, NCN (National College Network). As Director, NCN Foundation and NCN Institute, France conducted orientation programs in Japan prior to the first group of students coming to the US, and continued IEA guidance in the US. IEA was then asked to open two offices, one in Washington, DC and one in Philadelphia. During that time, IEA supervised the placement and counseling of over 20 Japanese counselors and over 300 students.

From 1997 to 2000, Dr. Pruitt was the Director of Placement and University Relations for Japan affiliated ENC (Education Connect) and AEN (American Educational Network) with Michael Merner and Japanese associates. France provided opportunities and continued advisement for international students to study in the US.



For 20 years, Dr. Pruitt interviewed US teachers for the JET program, (Japan Exchange and Teaching Program). The students who were applying, had a college degree, and were interested in teaching English in secondary schools in Japan for at least two years. For many years, she also read the applications from those students who were applying from different parts of the country. During that time, she traveled multiple times to Japan and met twice with Ministry representatives, including Mombusho, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the umbrella organization which administers the program. She and others were tasked to include lessons learned through the interview process in order to improve the program forward.

Founded in 1987, JET has sent more than 70,000 participants from 55 countries around the globe. Currently, over 35,800 Americans have worked in schools, boards of education, and government offices throughout Japan.

In 2006, Dr. Pruitt was the guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the JET Program. She and nine other representatives from English speaking countries were celebrated for a week of Anniversary events. She also had the opportunity to meet the Crown Prince Naruhito, now the Emperor of Japan.



*Crown Prince Naruhito JET Program 20th Anniversary Commemorative*

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In 1987, she worked for the government of Togo to assess placement opportunities for their students.

From 1989 to 1991, she conducted workshops for re-entry seminars for international students for the Foreign Student Service Council.

From 1991 to 2012, Dr. Pruitt was a reader and an evaluator for the ASHA program (American School and Hospital Program) of the US Agency for International Development. She visited three programs in Bulgaria, Greece, and Honduras to obtain first-hand information.

From 1992 to 1995, Dr. Pruitt evaluated proposals for FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education), and the International Education Office of the Department of Education.

From 1992 to 1996, she was the US representative of ITESM, the Instituto Tecnológico Y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey. The goal was to hire Mexican students studying in the US to become teachers back at ITESM in Mexico.

From 1995 to 2007, Dr. Pruitt was the US representative for the Spanish organization, Los Geranios, to recruit US students for their Spanish Institute in Seville.

From 1993 to 1996, she was the US representative for the French organization, BGS Conseils to place French interns in US industries.

In 1995, Dr. Pruitt was the Public Relations Director for the Moscow Institute for Social and Political Studies, to increase their program outreach.

From 1995 to 1996, she facilitated re-entry workshops for the Institute of International Education.

From 1996 to 2002, she worked with a Korean colleague, John Kim, to recruit and place Korean high school students in US boarding schools through the International Education Placement & Service.

## **Further Historical Partnerships**

In 1998, she was the Conference Coordinator for IACM 11<sup>th</sup> Conference at the University of Maryland. IACM is Dean Pruitt's professional organization, the International Association for Conflict Management.

From 2009 to 2015, Dr. Pruitt was the co-chair of SEF International (Science and Education for the Future International – SEF and/or SEFI), a Chinese American company which recruited English teachers for the SPA (Shanghai Pacican Academy), <http://www.sef-international.com/2010/0113/18.html>, a branch of the Chinese Ministry of Education along with CCIEE (China Center for International Educational Exchange) and the CEAIE (China Education International Exchange Association) <http://www.ceaie.edu.cn/guanyuxiehui/14.html>. She worked with Sufei Li and Manda Fang. The Pacican Academy did the hiring. Dr. Pruitt took the first group of ten teachers to Shanghai to evaluate the totality of arrangements that the Academy was offering the teachers. That program called TELC (Teaching English while Learning Chinese)

<http://www.sef-international.com/2010/0113/8.html> phased out due to fewer American students interested in going to China, possibly because of the pollution, politics, et al.

Throughout those last two decades, Dr. Pruitt also worked as a reviewer and panelist for the US Department of Education, Critical Languages, and as a consultant for the US Chinese Education Trust, as well as a consultant for the American University in Bulgaria. Other affiliations include; Management Training & Development Institute, Advena Management (Russian students to America)

## **Historic IEA Move from Maryland to North Carolina**

What a move! Now here in the Chapel Hill area, I enjoy meeting up with family in Shelby, Winston Salem and Pittsboro.

I am currently coordinating with the Departments of Education at UNCCH and American University, where I received my undergraduate degree and masters degree in International Education.

In 1988, I concluded my field research in Shikokho, Kenya on "The Role of Women's Groups in Education and Health in Rural Kenya". While living with the Chair of the Shikokho Women's Group (SWG), we developed their goals into projects and programs.

After my return, the Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church (CCPC) in Washington, DC and SWG and community began building and providing for the following:

Shikokho Medical Center (SMC)

Shikokho Maternity Wing

Shikokho Feeding Program for over 200 daily

Salaries for 3 Shikokho Primary School (SPC) annually

Annual Scholarships for over 60 Shikokho Secondary School (SSS) students

All university students, faculty and church people are encouraged to participate. Contact Gretchen at 919-542-4151 and cell for texts at 703-470-2087.