



Embassy of the United States of America
Office of Public Affairs
Baku, Azerbaijan

83, Azadlıq Prospekt
AZ1007 Baku, Azerbaijan
Email: seyidovag@state.gov

Phone: +(99412) 498 03 35
Fax: +(99412) 465 66 71
URL: azerbaijan.usembassy.gov

MEDIA ADVISORY

US Scholars Arrive to Learn Azerbaijani June 10, 2011

A group of 11 American scholars arrived in Baku on June 10 to study Azerbaijani under the United States Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) program. The CLS Program, administered by American Councils, provides opportunities for American university and graduate students to study Azerbaijani, which the United States government recognizes as a strategically important foreign language.

This year's Critical Language Scholars include beginner, intermediate, and advanced Azerbaijani-speakers. The program will be hosted by the Azerbaijan University of Languages and provides group-based intensive language instruction for a minimum of 20 hours per week and structured cultural enrichment experiences. Participants will develop fluency in the Azerbaijani and learn more about Azerbaijan's rich culture by being paired with "language peers" (host-country university students), engaging in volunteer activities in their host communities and living with host families in Baku. CLS participants are expected to continue their language study beyond the scholarship and apply their critical language skills in their future professional careers.

This year's Critical Language Scholars are among 575 U.S. university and graduate students studying in 14 priority languages, including Azerbaijani. They were chosen from more than 5,200 applicants through a merit-based selection process.

The U.S. Department of State launched the Critical Language Scholarships for Intensive Summer Institutes in 2006 to increase opportunities for American students to study critical languages overseas. The program is part of a wider U.S. government effort to expand the number of Americans studying and mastering critical languages, such as Azerbaijani.

For further information about the CLS Program or other exchange programs offered by ECA, please visit our websites at <http://www.clscholarship.org> and <http://exchanges.state.gov>. For more information about the program in Azerbaijan, visit the Azerbaijan University of Languages website <http://www.adu.edu.az/> or American Councils Azerbaijan website <http://www.americancouncils.az/>.

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