

The Republic of the Marshall Islands and the United States of America



Relationship with the U.S. Helps Local Students Realize Dreams

When citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands consider college, the lucky ones will cross paths with Pranson Eliou. His experience as a student and as an EducationUSA adviser makes him the perfect bridge for connecting people to their educational goals.

"In my outreach efforts for the College of the Marshall Islands, I help students choose a career based on their interests," he said. "Then we research schools and financial aid. I am there for them right up until they get on the plane to leave."

Pranson said the majority of students go to the United States to earn degrees in education, nursing, or business administration because of Pell grants and visa-free travel, but they return home to live and work.

"Doctor Hilda Heine is a good example," he explained. "She graduated from a U.S. institution and is now our first female president of the Marshall Islands. No other funding could help us complete our studies, realize our dreams, and support our families, our community, and our country like Pell grants." He added that his counseling experience indicates visa-free travel is another major reason for choosing U.S. colleges.

While successfully matching students with a university is rewarding, it does not compare to the pride and accomplishment Pranson feels when they return home, especially when they come to personally thank him for his support.

"It is one of the best feelings ever for me!" he said.

Pranson, who is from the Federated States of Micronesia but has lived in the Marshall Islands for about seven years, also got his degree—and later a job as an adviser—thanks to education and visa-free travel benefits provided through the relationship that the Marshall Islands has with the United States. His enthusiasm is contagious.

"I loved coming home to serve my people and my neighbors," he said. "I love my work, too, because it makes a difference here and helps connect us to the world. The students who go to the United States for college represent the Marshall Islands at universities or institutions they attend. I am thankful for them and thankful they have an opportunity to do that."

Potential students in the Marshall Islands are equally thankful for counselors like Pranson!

For more information on EducationUSA, see www.educationusa.state.gov. For more information on the assistance provided to the Marshall Islands by the U.S. go to <https://mh.usembassy.gov/our-relationship/progress-through-partnership/>.