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Citizenship, Civic Participation and Health Literacy Program Matching College Students with Elderly Immigrants Earns National Award for Exceptional Immigrant Integration Initiatives

WASHINGTON – The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) on Wednesday announced that Project SHINE (Students Helping In the Naturalization of Elders) is one of four recipients of its 2011 [E Pluribus Unum](#) Prizes for exceptional immigrant integration initiatives. The national award honors Project SHINE, an intergenerational learning program through which nearly 10,000 college students have worked with elderly immigrants and refugees to improve their English proficiency, civics knowledge and health literacy.

The Intergenerational Center at Temple University serves as the national office of the SHINE network, which operates on 19 campuses and a community non-profit in nine states: California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Texas.

SHINE and the other *E Pluribus Unum* Prizes winners will be honored tonight at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., featuring U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and other national policymakers. The national award is accompanied by a \$50,000 prize.

The *E Pluribus Unum* Prizes program, established in 2008 by MPI's [National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy](#) with generous support from the [J.M. Kaplan Fund](#), seeks to encourage the adoption of effective integration practices and inspire others to take on the important work of integrating immigrants and their children so they can join the mainstream of U.S. society.

SHINE partners with colleges and universities, immigrant communities and local health/aging networks to improve elderly immigrants' English language skills, knowledge of U.S. civics and history and understanding of healthy aging practices. SHINE volunteers also prepare older immigrants to take the U.S. citizenship test. SHINE also enhances the health communication skills of older immigrants, addressing their language and health literacy needs.

Since 1997, Project SHINE has offered educational services to over 40,000 older immigrants and refugees, an often-overlooked segment of the immigrant population that is less able to actively seek ways to better integrate into local communities. Nearly 10,000 college students have participated in Project SHINE since the initiative's inception, volunteering more than 150,000 hours. By instilling an ethos of service and civic participation, SHINE helps future leaders by giving them a window into new cultures and older generations.

“Project SHINE is an exceptional model of two-way integration. The students provide important English, civics and literacy knowledge to an immigrant population that is often overlooked by

others, and at the same time are exposed to the rich cultures and experiences of older migrants,” said Margie McHugh, co-director of MPI’s National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy.

“The program provides elderly immigrants and refugees with new links to their communities,” said MPI Senior Vice President Michael Fix, who is co-director of the National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. “SHINE has strong metrics demonstrating its success with this often harder-to-reach elderly population.”

A study by the American Institutes for Research found that only 46 percent of first-time applicants for citizenship over the age of 65 passed the naturalization exam, compared to the national pass rate of 84 percent. Ninety percent of Project SHINE participants who take the citizenship test pass it. Student volunteer tutors provide at least two hours of mentoring weekly per semester, with lesson plans and one-on-one teaching or in small class settings.

“Older immigrants have a strong desire to learn about their new countries and contribute to their communities. They may have difficulty learning in a regular classroom setting due to pace of instruction, isolation or linguistic barriers. SHINE has evolved over the years as it responds to the needs identified by older immigrants,” said Project SHINE Program Director Patience Lehrman. “Through SHINE, older immigrants have reported increased confidence in their ability to communicate with health practitioners, increased access to health services and increased civic participation.”

Project SHINE has been replicated at colleges and universities in California (San Jose State University, San Jose City College, San Francisco State University, City College of San Francisco, California State University at Northridge and California State University Fullerton); Georgia (Emory University and Georgia Perimeter College); Hawaii (Chaminade University, Kapi’olani Community College and University of Hawaii at Manoa), Minnesota (Metropolitan State University and Minneapolis Community and Technical College); New York (Utica College and Hamilton College); North Carolina (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and UNC Greensboro); and Texas (University of Texas at El Paso and El Paso Community College). It also operates in Colorado at the Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning.

The other 2011 *E Pluribus Unum* Prize winners are the International Rescue Committee in San Diego, Hispanic Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City (MO) and the Welcome Back Initiative. Marriott International received the first-ever *E Pluribus Unum* Corporate Leadership Award.

Winner highlights can be found at www.integrationawards.org/winners-SHINE.cfm. For more information or to set up interviews, contact Michelle Mittelstadt at 202-266-1910, mmittelstadt@migrationpolicy.org; or Burke Speaker at 202-266-1920, bspeaker@migrationpolicy.org.

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The Migration Policy Institute is an independent, non-partisan think tank in Washington, D.C. dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national and international levels.