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The Spanish Ministry of Education and The Boeing Company have teamed to award scholarships which will allow 18 Spanish teachers from the state of Washington to study in Spain this summer.

All teachers selected for the scholarships either teach Spanish as a foreign language or work in bilingual education programs in private or public schools whose students are between the ages of 6 and 18.

The teachers will spend three weeks in July at Spain's University of Salamanca, founded in 1218 and the second-oldest continuing university in the world. There, they will attend seminars on Spanish culture and the Spanish language. All courses and activities are conducted in Spanish.

"Boeing values education and supports efforts like this which give teachers a unique opportunity to increase subject knowledge," said Philip de St Aubin, Boeing country executive for Spain. "Immersion in everyday Spanish life can only improve their command of the Spanish language and their knowledge of the country. The overall objective is to promote understanding between our two cultures. That should ultimately lead to an expansion of personal and business relationships between Spain and the United States."

Boeing and the Spanish Ministry of Education both pay half of each scholarship, which covers tuition, course materials, lodging, meals, medical insurance and other expenses. The Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, which is administering the scholarships, ensures that teachers who complete the three-week program receive educational credits.

"We believe that at the end of the three weeks, these teachers will return to their classrooms and their students with a more profound knowledge of Spain, its culture and its people," said Fernando Esteban, Seattle-based vice consul of Spain. "Students in Washington state are the real beneficiaries of this scholarship."

Estaban established the scholarship program in 1998. Each year since, a group of Washington state teachers has been chosen, under this same program, to receive scholarships to study in Spain.

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