

Multi Nation Program



Flavio Nogueira | Minas Gerais, BRAZIL
President & CEO, Colortextil Participações Ltda
Secretary General, Federation of Industries of the State of Minas Gerais (FIEMG)

Hailing from a long line of entrepreneurs, Flavio Nogueira is President and CEO of Colortextil Participações Ltda., a large textile producer in Brazil. He is also President of the Union of Knitting Textile Industries of Minas Gerais, Secretary General of the Federation of Industries of the State of Minas Gerais, and participates actively in many professional associations. On his fellowship, Mr. Nogueira sought to gain information and insights to help him improve the environment for entrepreneurs in Brazil; he also visited companies and organizations active in the U.S. textile industry.

Key questions driving Mr. Nogueira's fellowship included how the U.S. maintains a leading role globally in the field of innovation, and how entrepreneurial ventures are fostered, supported and sustained. Visits to leading entrepreneurial organizations, including the Kauffman Foundation and Innovate St. Louis, complemented meetings at academic institutions including UC Berkeley's Lester Center for Entrepreneurship and Washington University at St. Louis's Skendalaris Center for Entrepreneurship. Mr. Nogueira found that "the U.S. has made an assembly line of new, innovative companies, and numerous institutions exist to support entrepreneurs in the Silicon Valley and elsewhere." He also noted "One of the things that I didn't expect to see in the U.S. was the culture of failure. If you fail in the Silicon Valley for example, it is fine and part of the business; if you never failed, it means you probably never tried."

During his fellowship meetings, Mr. Nogueira found many noteworthy examples of entrepreneurs' associations raising funds and representing their membership. However, he concluded that the American system, by operating without public support, has an unexpected downside: "Rather than being more connected to industry, they have become hostage to their sponsors and represent only the largest organizations." He stated "I discovered that the American system has its failures and it's not the role model I expected to find to guide Brazilian associations away from heavy reliance on public funding. Maybe the solution is a hybrid system."

Visits to leading textile universities, including North Carolina State University's College of Textiles and Philadelphia University (formerly the Philadelphia College of Textiles & Science), as well as to companies involved in textile production, all resulted in plans for partnerships. Mr. Nogueira hopes to return to see more of the vast holdings at the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, MA, and he plans to establish on-going relationships with the National Council of Textile Organizations and the American Apparel and Footwear Association.

Mr. Nogueira maintained good spirits throughout his fellowship travels, despite his propensity for attracting natural disasters: his hotel in Raleigh was hit by a tornado, his flight departing St. Louis was the last to leave before they were hit by a tornado, and in Chicago his outbound flight was delayed by six hours due to ice and snow - in mid-April.

He returns to Brazil with a numerous partnership possibilities and concepts to implement. These include establishing a program to mentor new companies in Brazil by tapping volunteer entrepreneurs and executives, which would mirror a model he saw in Saint Louis. He also plans to link Brazilian start-up companies with incubators, and to foster the availability of venture capital financing. To promote entrepreneurship in Brazil, he will explore establishment of a foundation in association with the Federation of Industries in his state of Minas Gerais. More immediately, he has scheduled presentations on his fellowship findings for professional organizations, stating "I hope to spread as much as I can the knowledge I absorbed during my stay in the U.S., so I can maximize Eisenhower Fellowships' investment in me." In a fitting conclusion to his fellowship program, Mr. Nogueira learned the week prior to his return that Brazil's Minister of Science and Technology had confirmed his appointment to FINEP, the Brazilian Innovation Agency.

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