

Fulbright Scholars in Public Administration, Public Affairs, and Public Policy

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Editor's Note. The year 2011 marks the 65th anniversary of America's preeminent international educational exchange program, the Fulbright Scholar Program. In recognition of the international impact of this program, the Journal of Public Affairs Education is publishing a series of first-person accounts of the Fulbright experiences of our colleagues. To provide perspective for this series, this paper provides background about the program and examines patterns in U.S. Fulbright Scholar awards over the past 5 years.

HISTORY

The stated purpose of the Fulbright Program is to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries” (Title 22 U.S. Code Sec. 2451, 1961). According to its founder and namesake, J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, the program “is built on the premise” that “America has much to teach in the world but also much to learn, and that the greater our intellectual involvement with the world beyond our frontiers, the greater the gain for both America and the world” (Fulbright, 1965, p. vii).

At the conclusion of World War II, **Senator Fulbright** introduced a bill to fund the “promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science.” The Fulbright Act became law on August 1, 1946, when it was signed by President **Harry S. Truman**. This move has been described as “a political coup” that helped prevent the reemergence of isolationism that occurred after World War I. The program was initially funded creatively by selling war surplus properties overseas to host countries whose currencies had little value with the proceeds designated to support the international exchange of scholars to and from the United States (McWhirter, 2010, p. 33).

Funded by Congress, the Fulbright Scholar Program is supervised by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FSB) appointed by the president of the United States. The U.S. Scholar program is administered by the Council for

International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), a division of the Institute of International Education (IIE), under the direction of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State and binational Fulbright Commissions and Foundations or (in the absence of formal bilateral organizations) the Public Affairs Sections of U.S. Embassies (IIE, 2010).

Almost 300,000 participants from around the world have been supported by all Fulbright programs since its inception; 111,000 have been U.S. scholars going abroad, other participants have been U.S. students or foreign scholars and students coming to the United States. Typically, over 1,000 grants are awarded to U.S. scholars to go to as many as 150 countries annually (CIES, 2010b). Most of these awards (700–800 annually in recent years) are “core” Scholar awards, the focus of this article, and involve one or two semesters at a host institution. Other types, such as Senior Specialist awards, seminar awards and travel-only grants, are for shorter periods of time and are not addressed here. Of the core Scholar awards, approximately two-thirds are for either teaching or both teaching and research; one-third support research with no teaching responsibilities. Roughly half of current grants are open to “All Disciplines” and allow applicants to propose “a unique approach to any topic.” The specific characteristics and requirements of each award are determined by the host country (CIES, 2010a).

Only one previous study has tracked Fulbright Scholars from a specific discipline. McWhirter and McWhirter (2010) identified 114 Fulbright Scholars from the field of “counseling psychology” between 1952 and 2010. Initially, in this field, most Scholars were men and went to English-speaking countries, although in recent years most have been women going to a wide variety of countries. Other researchers had noted that about 70% of all awards between 1992 and 1996 had gone to men but concluded that this was due to factors such as the proportion of women in academia at the time, and not to lower odds of being selected (Elfenbein, Lucas, Ewell, Cirksena, & McFadden, 1998).

APPLICATIONS AND MOTIVATIONS

The Fulbright Scholar program has three main eligibility requirements: (a) US Citizenship, (b) PhD or equivalent professional/terminal degree, and (c) teaching experience (if required by the award). Scholars are not all university faculty members; some have other affiliations such as with community colleges, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. About 9 out of 10 Scholars are first-time awardees, and the lifetime limit is two awards. Except at a few locations in Latin America and Africa, English is typically the language of instruction. Some awards require applicants to provide a letter of invitation from the host institution. The CIES website provides detailed advice about how to acquire an invitation. While applicants are not allowed to apply to more than one country at a time, they can indicate their interest in other opportunities if the first choice is not awarded (CIES, 2010c).

Faculty members choose to teach in other countries for many personal and professional reasons. CIES (2010a, 2010c) suggests that some of the especially important values include

- Sharing knowledge
- Gaining teaching insights
- Discovering new research directions
- Understanding global context of your discipline
- Establishing long-term professional relationships
- Allowing family to experience a different culture
- Representing your country
- Globalizing your home institution
- Refreshing your thinking
- Learning about your discipline in a context outside the United States

In addition, Ammerman (1984) found it rewarding to help people in other countries understand that not all Americans are like those portrayed by Hollywood. More recently Infeld experienced this same reaction during her Fulbright in China in 2007, as illustrated by a student's question about whether everyone in America owns a gun (Infeld & Wenzhao, 2009).

Donald Hall described, in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2007), numerous benefits based on several international exchange experiences. He argues it fundamentally challenged his assumptions and frames of reference for teaching. He learned, for example:

how individuals, even in the most difficult economic circumstances, can create networks of support and information sharing to produce important research and locally useful knowledge; . . . how difficult it is to transplant American theories of gender and ethnic differences to a country with very different racial demographics and norms of masculinity and femininity; how far we in the United States lag behind others in interdisciplinary teaching and research, and how radically we might rethink our professional self-definitions and boundaries. (p. 54)

Hall contends that international teaching experiences subsequently help American students as well. Students gain from a faculty member's "diversified, and deepened" knowledge base, ability to broaden the narrow American perspective, and "firsthand experience about the culturally specific assumptions embedded in the materials" being taught. Students also gain by learning "the cultural limitations of their knowledge, which they must if they are to develop effective global-communication skills" (p. 54).

SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM

Senator Fulbright himself wrote that the program's objectives "cannot be quickly realized and are not measureable in immediate tangible returns" (1965, p. viii). Yet evaluation efforts have attempted to measure some of those results and have reached encouraging conclusions. The most recent evaluation was conducted by SRI International based on a random sample of 801 who were U.S. Fulbright Scholars during 1976–1999 (Ailes & Russell, 2002). This outcome assessment examined the Scholars' experiences and post-grant activities. It concluded that the program met objectives specified in the original Fulbright Act:

- To increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and the people of other countries
- To strengthen the ties that unite the United States with other nations
- To promote international cooperation for education and cultural advancement
- To assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world

The SRI study compared the assessments of those in the social sciences (including public administration and other fields of focus here) to those in other disciplines. A large majority (80%) of the social scientists reported gaining a deeper understanding of international issues in general; 80% gained professional expertise they would not otherwise have developed; and 62% said they developed a better understanding of American society. About half (49%) said the experience enhanced their professional credentials; 45% said it contributed "a great deal" to greater insight into their field; 38% said it helped their career "a lot," and 32% reported that it was at least partly responsible for an award or professional position that they later received.

In addition to quantitative findings, the report includes many qualitative observations from former Fulbrighters voicing enthusiasm about the program. Here are two examples:

"The Fulbright Scholar Program increases knowledge, tolerance, curiosity, and, most of all, delight in differences." . . .

"I think [the Fulbright Scholar Program] is the jewel in the crown of international intellectual and cultural exchange. It is also an antidote to prejudice and stereotypes that thrive amidst ignorance. And it forms people-to-people bonds that serve as vital bridges for communication and cooperation." (p. ii)

The Fulbright Scholar program is widely viewed as successful, in part because of its “multiplier effect” (Ammerman, 1984; Ailes & Russell, 2002). Because teaching involves sharing ideas and reactions with a wide audience of students and colleagues, the benefits are multiplied many times over. Senator Fulbright himself was a Rhodes Scholar, and he understood well the importance of students and teachers understanding other cultures, believing that “nations make mistakes because they do not understand one another’s psychology” (Ammerman, 1984, p. 422).

The assessment by Ailes and Russell (2002) concludes with a summary of this multiplier effect:

During the grants, the Scholars teach, collaborate in research with colleagues and students, organize workshops, provide media interviews, socialize, and in many other ways interact with colleagues, students, neighbors, and others in their host countries. When they leave, they leave behind books and other materials, changed curricula, new ideas, and new perspectives. After they return to the United States, not only do friendships and professional relationships established in the host countries tend to persist, but also Scholars—and their families—bring their own new knowledge and perspectives back to share with their U.S. colleagues, students, and friends. Thus, through the Scholars’ personal as well as professional contacts with others, the grants inevitably affect many individuals in both the United States and the host countries, both during the grant and for many years after.

With its highly favorable reputation, the Fulbright budget has generally enjoyed steady growth as the flagship program in the State Department’s budget for all “academic programs.” That sector’s budget grew from 123 million dollars in FY 2000 to 311 million in FY 2009, and 357 million was requested by the Obama administration for FY 2010, representing a nearly threefold increase over one decade.

RECENT PATTERNS IN NASPAA-RELATED FULBRIGHT AWARDS

Public administration is one of 45 disciplines in which awards are offered; but disciplines are broadly construed, and other Fulbright categories often encompass scholars of public affairs, public policy, and public administration. For the most recent five academic years (2006–2011), we searched the Fulbright records and identified 41 core Fulbright Scholar awards in the category of public administration. Public affairs and public policy do not have separate disciplinary categories, but closer inspection identified another 112 awards to faculty whose research or lecture topics centered on public affairs, public policy, or public administration. This expanded list drew primarily from the Fulbright award

categories of political science (37), economics (12), law (12), education (11), environmental science (10), and sociology (7). For a personal example of these malleable categories, one of the coauthors taught in the Master of Public Administration program at the University of Malaya, yet the formal award was in “political science” not “public administration.”

During this 5-year period, the 153 Fulbright Scholars in public administration and the related fields hailed from 126 different institutions. Three universities each produced four Scholars: California State University, Long Beach; George Washington University; and the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Three universities had three each: University of Hawaii, Manoa; University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; and Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis. Another dozen schools each sent two Fulbright Scholars, and the remaining 108 institutions sent one each, including three from different federal departments and four from different city governments. Clearly the field is not monopolized by a handful of schools and is successfully drawing an extremely wide array of colleges and universities ranging from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, to the University of South Florida, Tampa.

More than two-thirds of these Scholars taught abroad, including 56 in the grant category of “lecturing” and another 53 appointments classified as “lecturing/research.” The rest (44) were designated as “research” with no regular lecture commitment. These numbers reflect the same basic distribution reported by CIES across all disciplines. These labels do not entirely capture the Fulbright

Table 1.
U.S. Fulbright Scholars and Region, 2006–2011

CIES Region	All Scholars		Public Admin. and Public Policy		Difference
	N	Percent	N	Percent	
Africa, sub-Saharan	330	8.9	12	7.8	-1.1%
East Asia and Pacific	604	16.3	40	26.1	+9.8%
Europe	1617	43.6	67	43.8	+0.2%
Middle East and N. Africa	268	7.2	3	2.0	-5.2%
South and Central Asia	294	7.9	9	5.8	-2.1%
Western Hemisphere	597	16.1	22	14.4	-1.7%
Total	3710	100	153	99.9	

Note: This table excludes an estimated 109 Scholars whose spring 2011 awards were not yet finalized at the time this article went to press.

experience, however, because most researchers are likely to give at least a few talks, and many lecturers are likely to conduct at least some research (e.g., Infeld, Adams, Qi, & Rosnah, 2010). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that so many appointments do explicitly encompass regular lecturing in foreign classrooms, inevitably a cultural and intellectual challenge that expands horizons in many memorable ways.

Worldwide, during the 2006–2011 period, the program sent 3,652 Americans abroad for one or two semesters as Fulbright Scholars (excluding the shorter duration programs). As shown in Table 1, a plurality (44%) went to Europe, while East Asia and the Pacific (16%) and the Western Hemisphere (16%) together garnered about one-third of all Scholars. Similarly, in our fields, a plurality of the destinations (44%) were also in Europe: United Kingdom 10; Ireland 7; Italy 7; Hungary 6; Czech Republic 3; France 3; Poland 3; Serbia 3; Spain 3; Ukraine 3; Belgium 2; Netherlands 2; Slovenia 2; and one each to 13 other countries (see Figure 1).

The most notable difference for our fields was that, compared to Fulbright Scholars in other disciplines, relatively more of those in public administration, public affairs, and public policy ventured to East Asia or the Pacific (26%): China 16; Japan 4; Korea 4; Australia 3; the Philippines 3; Malaysia 2; Singapore 2; Taiwan 2; and one each in 4 other nations. Closer to home, about one in seven

Figure 1.

Countries with U.S. Fulbright Scholars in Public Administration, Public Affairs, and Public Policy, 2006–2011 (in gray)



of our colleagues stayed in the Western Hemisphere (14%), including Canada 6, Mexico 4, Brazil 3, Costa Rica 2, and one each in 5 other countries.

Less common, but in line with Fulbrighters of all disciplines, were 12 assignments in sub-Saharan Africa (scattered among 11 countries with 2 in Ghana) and 9 in South and Central Asia (India 5; Kazakhstan 2; Bangladesh 1; Bhutan 1). The rarest placements for our fields, running markedly behind Fulbrights overall, were in the Middle East where only three individuals journeyed recently (one each to Egypt, Israel, and Qatar).

Altogether, six countries—China (16), the United Kingdom (10), Ireland (7), Italy (7), Canada (6), and Hungary (6)—received one third of the U.S. Fulbright Scholars in our fields, but the rest were widely dispersed among 59 other countries. While positions are not necessarily abundant everywhere, there are few corners of the world where Fulbright opportunities do not exist. Currently, the program has posted awards available to send Scholars from the United States to over 130 countries for one or two semesters during the 2011–12 academic year (CIES, 2010d).

Within these countries, the destination universities and other institutions are also quite varied. While it was common for some foreign universities to have two U.S. Fulbrighters in our fields during the past five years, four universities had three or more. In Italy, the Polytechnic Institute of Turin garnered five for its Distinguished Chair dedicated for visiting scholars, the most of any single place. Queen’s University Belfast has a dedicated Fulbright award in “governance,

Table 2.
U.S. Fulbright Scholar Trends, 2006–2011

Grant Year	All Scholars	Public Admin., Public Affairs, and Public Policy	
	N	N	Percent
2006–07	781	34	4.4
2007–08	760	31	4.1
2008–09	773	42	5.4
2009–10	725	26	3.6
2010–11*	781	22	2.8
5-year total	3,820	155	4.1

* As of October 20, 2010, a total of 672 awards were finalized for 2010–11, including 20 in our fields. These numbers are based on projections from CIES that add awards pending final clearances for spring 2011.

public policy, and social research” and had a steady stream of four in our fields. Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea, also reaped four. Three went to the University of Belgrade.

Also varied were the academic ranks for Fulbright Scholars in our fields. One third (33%) were full professors, one-third (33%) were associate professors, and one-seventh (14%) were assistant professors. Most of the rest held research appointments (10%) or fell into miscellaneous categories (10%, lecturers, administrators, attorneys, unaffiliated “independent scholars,” and others). And, in contrast to past patterns (Elfenbein et al., 1998; McWhirter & McWhirter, 2010), the gender balance is rather close; women comprise 45% of recent Fulbright Scholars in our fields.

Over the past five grant cycles, an average of about 4% of all awards have gone to scholars in public administration, public affairs, and public policy. As shown in Table 2, the number has ranged from a peak of 42 people (5.4% of all U.S. Fulbright Scholars) in 2008–09 to a projected low of no more than two dozen (2.8% of all Scholars) in 2010–11. The number of awards identified specifically under the Fulbright category of public administration has declined steadily from 11 in 2006–07, to 10 in 2007–08, to 9 in 2008–09, to 8 in 2009–10, to only four (so far) for 2010–11 (one or two more are pending).

Some or all of this change could reflect ordinary year-to-year variation of plus or minus 1.3% around the recent mean of about 4.1%; indeed, if we conceived of the yearly data as samples, the variation would be within the margins of error. We have not been able to identify any particular reason for the recent downturn in the number of public administration Scholars or for the erosion in the broader grouping encompassing public affairs and public policy Scholars. The number of offered awards relevant to public administration, public affairs, and public policy does not appear to have undergone any corresponding decline. Moreover, the number of these awards is far greater than the number of faculty who are now securing them. For 2011–12, over 200 potential awards in 44 award categories offered for 31 countries specifically mention public administration among the desired disciplines, and nearly twice as many cite political science. Moreover, many other Fulbright Scholar awards are open to “all disciplines,” and others are open to groups of disciplines (e.g., all social sciences).

CONCLUSION

In the past few years, many U.S. faculty members in public administration, public affairs, and public policy—at various ranks in their academic careers coming from a diverse assortment of schools—have spent one or two semesters teaching and conducting research under the auspices of the venerable Fulbright Scholar program. They have gone to 65 countries, especially to Europe and East Asia, and to many other parts of the globe as well. The reflections of some of these Fulbright Scholars, forthcoming in the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*

this year, will provide analyses of the personal and professional impact of these experiences. We anticipate that they will be a powerful impetus to those who have not yet embarked on one of the most extraordinary adventures of an academic career. Based on these forthcoming case studies, along with the SRI evaluation data and the widespread person-to-person testimonials that may well serve as the program's best publicity, the available evidence suggests that the senator from Arkansas pioneered a truly remarkable worldwide educational exchange program that has stayed true to its mission for over six decades. Yet the U.S. Scholar program appears to have considerable potential for growth in public administration, public affairs, and public policy, if more scholars in these fields would take advantage of the many untapped opportunities.

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