Fulbright Scholar Programs Offer a World of Opportunities

Judy Pehrson, Council for International Exchange of Scholars

Since the Fulbright Program was signed into law in 1946, thousands of political science faculty have taken advantage of the opportunity it affords to lecture or do research in 140 countries around the globe. Indeed, political science has consistently been among the top 10 disciplines with the greatest number of grants available each year through the traditional Scholar Program. For the 2004–05 academic year, it tops the list with more than 100 awards open to political scientists.

Additional new grant opportunities are available as well. Under the auspices of the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES), which administers the Fulbright Program on behalf of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the traditional Fulbright Scholar Program has been expanded to include three new programs-—Fulbright New Century Scholars, Fulbright Senior Specialists, and Fulbright Alumni Initiatives Awards.

The Distinguished Chairs Program and German Studies Program are two smaller programs that continue to attract political science applicants.

Fulbright New Century Scholars Program

Launched in October of 2001, the Fulbright New Century Scholars Program (NCS) is an international, interdisciplinary research effort which annually brings together 30 of the world's top scholars to address a topic of global significance. Two-thirds of these scholars come from the international community.

The theme for the 2002 program was "Challenges of Health in a Borderless World." Among the 30 NCS Fellows focusing on global public health were two political scientists: Richard Freeman, senior lecturer, School of Social and Political Studies, University of Edinburgh (United Kingdom), whose research concentrated on "Public Health and Policy Learning"; and Peter Koehn, professor of political science, University of Montana, whose research examined "Transnational Competence and Migrant Health in a Borderless World."

According to Koehn:

> Participation in NCS enriched my understanding of the physical—and mental—health challenges that face migrants and their health care providers. It has also helped give specific definition to my research questions, and has enhanced the adaptation and application of the transnational competence framework to migrant health care. I expect that sustained interaction with the NCS network of scholars exploring related research interests will continue to inform and inspire my scholarship in the future.

The NCS Fellows presented the results of their year's individual and collaborative efforts at a Final Plenary Seminar in November 2002 at the Pan American Health Organization in Washington, DC. Some 150 global health specialists, government policy makers, representatives from the World Bank, foundations, and think tanks attended the day-long meeting.

In 2003, a new group of NCS Fellows will focus on the topic, "Addressing Sectarian, Ethnic, and Cultural Conflict Within and Across National Borders." They will examine religious, cultural, and ethnic dimensions of civil conflict and assess how these components interact with each other to generate or to reduce conflicts within or between societies and regions. In addition, they will target key factors leading to conflict, as well as those that might help construct a viable peace.

Political scientists are well represented among the new group of NCS Fellows with three Americans and six international scholars. Saul Newman, chair of American University's Department of Government, was one of six peer reviewers who selected this year's NCS Fellows. He sees special opportunities for political scientists within the NCS Program:

> NCS will work perfectly for political scientists because it is extremely cross-disciplinary. We seek, in political science, to be cross-disciplinary because political science borrows many of its theoretical approaches from other disciplines. We have a limited number of theories and methodologies that originated with political science. A significant portion of what we write can be tied to the work of social scientists in other disciplines. NCS gives us a rich opportunity to interact with scholars from these and other social science disciplines.

Senior Specialists Program

The Fulbright Senior Specialists Program offers short-term grants of two to six weeks (with the option of serial grants) for U.S. faculty and professionals. Grantees collaborate with overseas counterparts on a wide variety of projects, including consulting on curriculum, assisting in institutional planning, offering teacher training, giving special lectures, participating in or leading seminars and workshops, and taking part in specialized academic programs and conferences.

This popular program sent 137 grantees, including seven political scientists, to 53 different countries in 2001–02. The program's application, peer review, and appointment process is unique in that it entirely online. The 865 academics and professionals selected as Senior Specialists are matched with requests from binational Fulbright Commissions in 52 countries and U.S. Embassies and diplomatic posts in another 89.

Mary Segers, professor and chair of the political science department at Rutgers University, Newark, was among the first group of Senior Specialists grantees. In October of 2001, she spent two weeks in Poland

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at Warsaw University's American Studies Center conducting a series of lectures entitled "A Post-Mortem on the 2000 Election in the U.S." She also was able to provide a first-hand account of the September 11th attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center:

> I actually think my most valuable contribution was to speak, as a native New Yorker, about the attack on the World Trade Center and its meaning for American society. At the same time, the beginning of U.S. bombing in Afghanistan forced us all, faculty and students, to wrestle with the applicability of just war theory, the danger of bio-terrorism, and the notion of a 'clash of civilizations' between Islam and the West.

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- Mary Segers on her Fulbright experience in Poland

Segers, who had earlier been a Fulbright Distinguished Chair in American Studies at the University of Warsaw in the spring of 1999, plans to return to Warsaw as part of her serial Specialists grant to teach a two-week mini-course on American politics.

Alumni Initiatives Awards

CIES launched the Fulbright Alumni Initiatives Awards Program (AIA) in 2001 for former U.S. and international Fulbright Scholars to support projects that continue work and partnerships initiated during their original Fulbright scholarship. Since its inception, over 43 former Fulbrighters have been awarded grants—including five political scientists.

Charles Tien, assistant professor of political science at CUNY, Hunter College, and James Nathan, Khalid bin Sultan Eminent Scholar at Auburn University, teamed up to apply for an AIA grant to create a long-term, multi-faceted exchange program between their institutions and the Foreign Affairs College in Beijing, China. Tien and Nathan had cooperated in conducting a lecture tour throughout China as Fulbright Scholars during the 1999–2000 academic year.

The two used their AIA grant to create a summer study-abroad program for American students at the Foreign Affairs College, as well as to teach courses to Chinese students in Beijing, many of whom will become China's future diplomats. In addition, Auburn University agreed to pay for a faculty member from the Foreign Affairs College to teach Chinese politics for one semester at Auburn.

So far, everything has gone as planned, says Tien, and both scholars are convinced that their project is carrying out the major goal of the Fulbright Scholar Program—that is, to promote mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other nations:

> We believe increased exchanges between China and America will be helpful for stabilizing future relations between the two countries. We also feel this institutional linkage will help Chinese students better understand America and will help American students better understand China on a continuing basis.

Distinguished Chairs Program

A feature of the Fulbright Scholar Program for nearly 20 years, Distinguished Chairs grants are designed for scholars who are at the top of their field. Most Chair awards—including a number in political science—are available in Western European countries, although a few are offered in Canada and Russia.

Susan Clarke, professor of political science at the University of Colorado, Boulder, spent a term as the Fulbright Thomas Jefferson Chair at the University of Amsterdam teaching courses on Globalization and Local Democracy and Social Policy and Poverty in the U.S.

"It was a terrific experience," she states. "One of the unexpected pleasures was having students from all over Europe, not just Dutch students. They brought diverse points of view to class with them, which made for exciting discussions."

She adds that she taught her classes much as she would at home. "I loaded an American-style set of writing assignments on the students, and they completed them without complaint. They also came to every class and stayed to the end, which is unusual in Europe."

German Studies Seminar Program

What was once a summer seminar for German specialists has in recent years become an interdisciplinary experience for specialists and non-specialists alike, including political scientists.

The annual three-week German Studies Seminar focuses on current German society and culture and examines political, social, and economic institutions. Past annual topics have included "International Migration and National Identities," "Challenges of Demographics," and "Environmental Protection and Alternative Forms of Energy."

DEADLINES

Traditional Fulbright Scholar Program – August 1

New Century Scholars Program – October 1

Senior Specialists Program – Rolling deadline

Alumni Initiatives Awards Program – February 15

Distinguished Chairs Program – May 1

German Studies Seminar Program – November 1

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The seminar begins in Berlin and includes visits to other cities in both the eastern and western parts of the country. There is also an opportunity for grantees to remain in Europe after the seminar to pursue individual research projects.

Irasema Coronado, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Texas, El Paso, notes that the 2002 seminar on "International Migration and National Identities" fit in well with her research interests. "My area is comparative politics," she explains, "and I am very interested in how other countries deal with immigration—how, for example, Turks in Germany get citizenship and what kinds of obstacles and challenges they encounter in attaining legal residency or participating in the political system."

She believes the seminar offers a good opportunity for other political scientists, especially if they are interested in comparative perspectives. "It was interesting for me to compare European Union integration with NAFTA," she states. "Overall, I benefited tremendously and had a wonderful time."

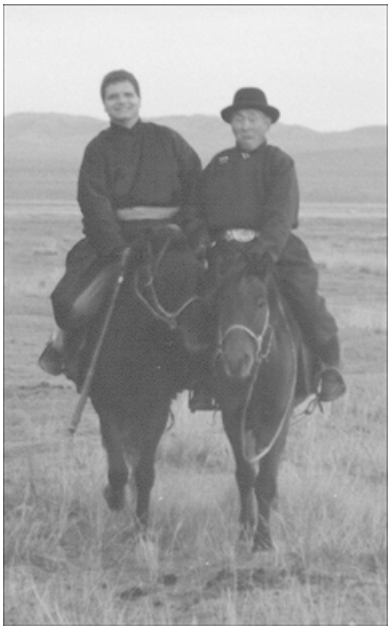
For further information on the Fulbright Scholar Programs, visit the CIES web site at www.cies.org, call 202-686-7877, or email: apprequest@cies.iie.org.

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- Charles Tien on his project with James Nathan in China

A Splendid Gift in Mongolia

Stephen Noerper's hosts were so grateful for his Fulbright work in Ulaan Baatar, and the spirit with which he carried it out, that they presented him with a horse. And not just any horse. They took Noerper, an accomplished rider, 150 kilometers into the Mongolian countryside to find a larger-than-average steed to accommodate his six-foot frame.



At the National University of Mongolia's School of Foreign Service, Noerper, who now serves with the U.S. State Department, taught upper-level graduate courses on globalization and geopolitics—preoccupations of Mongolians struggling to find their way in a changing world. With two superpowers at their borders, students also packed his lectures and roundtables on security and diplomacy. In addition, Noerper lectured on the U.S. presidency at the country's prestigious Academy of Sciences, and provided "attendant commentary" at a satellite broadcast of the second Gore-Bush presidential debate.

Noerper had come to Ulaan Baatar from Honolulu, where he had been a professor of international relations at the Asia Pacific Center. He bought a traditional Mongolian coat, sash, and boots after his arrival for protection against the cold. He also developed a taste for yogurt and fermented mare's milk. He was intrigued by the interplay of modernity and tradition.

"You'd think you're at the end of the world, but the city's got 150 Internet cafes," he states. "If you turn on your television, you get Italian TV, Spanish TV, three Russian stations, the BBC, CNN, and more. The average student speaks four languages."

The experience "greatly expanded my horizons," says Noerper, who is writing a book on Mongolia and its place in the world and contemplating another trip next year. "There are," he says, "few things more romantic than riding under the big blue skies of Mongolia, with its green vistas and rolling hills."

– Carole Ashkinaze

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