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Fulbright Program for U.S. Students – Sponsored by U.S. Department of State

U.S. FULBRIGHT APPLICANT NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 1 | JUNE 2006

FOCUS ON: TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED AND CHOOSING A HOST COUNTRY TABLE OF CONTENTS

[PROGRAM UPDATES](#)

- The Road Less Travelled: Tips on Applying for a Fulbright Grant
- Language Training Initiative
- Featured Video: Abimbola Cole, 2005 Fulbright Fellow to Botswana
- Fulbright At-A-Glance pages
- Tips for Getting Started and Choosing a Host Country
- Send Us Your Question

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED: TIPS ON APPLYING FOR A FULBRIGHT GRANT

by Shayna McHugh, 2005-2006 (Hamilton College, Chemistry, Brazil)

Many college students see only two possible paths after graduation: either getting a job or going to graduate school. When I began my senior year in college, I was not thrilled about either of these options. I felt stuck between a rock and a hard place until I heard about the Fulbright Program.

Established by Senator J. William Fulbright in 1946, the Fulbright Program aims to "increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries." I submitted an application and received a ten-month grant to do chemistry research in Brazil.



Shayna McHugh, 2005-2006 (Hamilton College, Chemistry, Brazil)

The transition was difficult at first. Although I had fairly extensive research experience, many of the procedures were done differently in the Brazilian laboratory. Between the language barrier and the challenges of adjusting to a different culture, it took about two months for me to feel fully settled in.

Any initial obstacles, however, pale in comparison to the enormous benefits of doing research abroad. First, you get to investigate a topic that really interests you. My research involves exploring sea creatures in search of chemical compounds that fight cancer. Other Fulbright grantees in Brazil are researching everything from contemporary Afro-Brazilian art to the effects of Amazon forest fragmentation on monkeys.

Second, living in a foreign country means that every day is a fascinating learning experience. Some of the differences between Brazilian and American culture are big and overarching, such as the conception of time and personal space; other differences appear in the smallest, most everyday details. I'm constantly discovering new ways of seeing the world.

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

Link with a local university or research organization at your destination.

Thanks to the widespread use of the Internet, it is now easier than ever to make contacts overseas. An affiliation with a local institution gives you access to information, books, equipment, contacts, and other resources that will prove invaluable to your research.

Present a focused research proposal.

Most people err on the side of making their topic too broad; a good research proposal targets a specific area of investigation. If you start with a narrow topic, you can research it in-depth, and then expand your study to other areas if time permits. If you begin with a broad topic, you will end up with only a shallow overview of the subject.

IF YOU ARE SELECTED

Learn the local language.

Not only will it make daily life easier, it will also allow you to interact with the native people on a deeper level and make friends. Try to take language classes before you leave home and seek a language teacher when you arrive at your destination.

Be flexible and patient in your research.

Don't expect to hit the ground running; it takes time to adjust to new surroundings. Having flexibility in your project is also important. You may find that you need to adjust your project's goals and methods, so keep an open mind and be ready to adapt.

Don't be a workaholic.

It can be tempting to dedicate many hours to your research in order to accomplish as much as possible. However, your life will be much more interesting if you get involved in the local community: join a club, play a sport, or work with a volunteer organization. Take advantage of the opportunity to try something new that you wouldn't have the chance to do in your home country.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

LANGUAGE TRAINING INITIATIVE

by IIE Staff

The Language Training Initiative provides a greater opportunity for Fulbrighters to continue to bridge the cultural barriers across the globe, promoting mutual understanding between nations. One hundred pre-grant awards will be available for students to pursue in-country training in Arabic, Azeri, Bengali, Chinese (Mandarin), Farsi, Gujarati, Hindi, Korean, Marathi, Pashto, Punjabi, Russian, Tajik, Turkish, Urdu, or Uzbek, in conjunction with a Fulbright proposal. If your project requires that you have attained significant language skills in one of these languages, then you may apply for this program and include a description of the language study in your proposal. To learn more about the Language Training Initiative, please click on the link below:

http://us.fulbrightonline.org/thinking_type.html#lang

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FEATURED VIDEO: ABIMBOLA COLE, 2005 FULBRIGHT FELLOW TO BOTSWANA

by IIE Staff

In the videos featuring Fulbright grantees, we've asked them to: (1) describe their Fulbright project; (2) explain the application process, and (3) to offer advice to future applicants. The link below features Abimbola Cole sharing some practical advice based on her own experiences. We strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with the application process by reviewing several of the student videos available on some country pages throughout our website.

http://us.fulbrightonline.org/program_country.html?id=15

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

FULBRIGHT AT-A-GLANCE PAGES

by IIE Staff

We have revamped the competition statistics page and included 'Fulbright At-A-Glance' information pages for the following regions: Africa; East Asia/Pacific; Near East/North Africa and South Asia; Western Hemisphere and Europe/Eurasia.

http://us.fulbrightonline.org/thinking_competition.html

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

TIPS FOR GETTING STARTED AND CHOOSING A HOST COUNTRY

by IIE Staff

Language Requirements

Many countries do not require a high level of fluency in the host country language as projects to these countries can typically be completed in English. Nevertheless, developing a hospitality or basic level of proficiency (which most applicants can obtain between applying and starting a grant) is highly recommended in order to successfully complete your program, and to survive comfortably while overseas. We also strongly advise reading the country summaries (available online at http://us.fulbrightonline.org/thinking_country.html and in the program brochure) to identify the host country language requirement, so that you can begin to prepare at the earliest possible time. Also keep in mind that for certain languages there is the possibility of pre-grant language training or enhancement. See [Language Training Initiative](#) below.

Videos

Take a look at the videos on the website. The videos feature Fulbright Commission Directors and Fulbright alumni offering advice to future applicants, and are a good preliminary resource when you're thinking of applying. The videos are located on the home page of our website, and are also available on the 'THINKING OF APPLYING' and 'HOW TO APPLY' pages.

Fulbright Directories

Our online directory is searchable by the following criteria: first name, last name, U.S. institution through which a former grantee applied, home state, field of study, country visited and/or grant year. This is a great resource for learning what types of projects have been funded in your chosen country since 1993.

Where to Get Help

There are numerous resources that you can use in preparing a Fulbright application. If you are currently enrolled at a U.S. institution, consult with your on-campus Fulbright Program Adviser. If you are applying at-large, or if you are enrolled and want specific information, we encourage you to contact the appropriate regional Program Managers at IIE (http://us.fulbrightonline.org/contact_us.html). Before calling, we suggest that you fully review the information about the prospective country, if available. We also encourage you to attend an IIE Guidance Session for students ([click here to see the schedules](#)). Lastly, do you have a friend, colleague or professor who received a Fulbright grant? One of the best resources to use when thinking of applying is a Fulbright alumnus/na who will provide useful information about his/her experiences. However, keep in mind that if he/she did not conduct their program in the same country to which you will apply, their advice may not necessarily be useful to your potential application.

Choosing a Host Country

Country/Regional competitiveness may play a role in determining the country to which you finally decide to apply, but a good rule of thumb is to choose the country that best suits the nature of your project, and provides the necessary resources for successful project completion. The Fulbright selection committees are looking for well-prepared applicants who have compelling reasons for applying to a specific country, and who have a feasible project for the grant timeframe for that particular country.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

SEND US YOUR QUESTION

by IIE Staff

If you have thoroughly reviewed the U.S. Student website and have not found the answer to your question, [click here](#) to send us your question. You will receive a reply via email from one of our Program Managers.

http://us.fulbrightonline.org/thinking_submit.html

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)