Fulbright U.S. Student Program Overview

**History of the Fulbright Program**

At the end of the Second World War, it was obvious to most people across all the Continents that wars, arms, and violent conflict never serve to resolve social and political problems and issues. It was widely recognized then that diplomacy, open discourse, mutual understanding and respectful exchange of views and opinions are the most effective and efficient means of communication among peoples across borders and cultures. It was in that climate that Senator J. William Fulbright introduced a bill in the United States Congress that called for the use of surplus war property to fund the 'promotion of international goodwill through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science.' On August 1, 1946, President Harry S. Truman signed the bill into law. Congress established the Fulbright Program, the flagship international educational and cultural exchange.

**The Fulbright Mission**

From its inception, the Fulbright Program has fostered bilateral relationships in which citizens and governments of other countries work with the U.S. to set joint priorities and shape the program to meet shared needs. The world has undergone significant transformation in the last 70 years, but the fundamental principle of international partnership remains. The goal of educational and cultural exchange remains at the core of the Fulbright mission. The Fulbright program has been sponsored by the U.S. Government yearly ever since.

The Fulbright program has a variety of opportunities for students, professional individuals, and people who do careers in academia. Obtaining a Fulbright fellowship as a student does not preclude you from obtaining additional Fulbright fellowships later. In fact, Fulbright fellowships are so prestigious that it is always advantageous to you, at whatever stage, to obtain a Fulbright fellowship.

**The Application Process**

The common denominator of all Fulbrighters across the world is internationalism: an open mind and a desire to meet people from other countries, and to learn from other cultures. The fundamental drive of all Fulbright endeavors is cultural and educational exchange. To be successful, your Fulbright applications must emphasize not only how you will gain from your experience abroad, and how much you will be able to share of your U.S. culture and education. The Fulbright experience is an educational and cultural win/win - and this should transpire in your application.

Your application, once submitted, goes through three levels of review. Peer review establishes the scientific validity and strength of the application. If the application obtains a sufficiently high score, the Fulbright Commission of the country to which the applicant has applied then reviews it for feasibility. If approved, the application is then screened by the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, a 12-member Board appointed by the President of the United States, which coordinates all national and foreign aspects of the Fulbright program, and has final authority for selection of all grantees.

**Types of Grants**

As a student at UCLA, three distinct types of Fulbright fellowships are open to you: in your last two years of doctoral studies, you may apply for Fulbright-Hays support, which permits you to do part of your doctoral research abroad. You need to be a graduate student in good standing, and have completed your preliminary oral examination. In your beginning years as a graduate student, or your "gap" year between undergraduate and graduate studies, you can obtain a Fulbright student academic research fellowship, which allows you to spend 6-12 months (depending on the country and the proposed work) in a research group of your choice under the mentorship of the expert you have selected in the country you chose. As undergraduate students complete their senior year, it may be the case that, while they feel the internationalism pull, they cannot articulate clearly a research focus: Fulbright recognizes that, and offers the possibility to these students to apply for the English Teaching Assistantship program, which permits them to gain an international experience of 3-9 months (depending on the country and the need), while refining their attraction to a given research subject.

You do not need to have extensive background of the country you are applying to at the time off the application. But, you do need to have established a connection there, and you do need to demonstrate that you have reasonable knowledge of the language.

**Support from Fulbright at UCLA**

There is a Fulbright Society at UCLA of over 300 Fulbrighters, across all departments on our campus. Membership includes faculty members, students and foreign Fulbrighters from over two dozen countries visiting our campus this academic year (https://grad.ucla.edu/deans/library/fulbrightwelcome.htm). The members of the Society see it as their role and privilege to help you and to guide you in crafting a winning Fulbright fellowship application. In addition, you can get help from the Graduate Writing Center (http://gsrc.ucla.edu/gwc/), the Graduate Division Office of Financial Support & Fellowships (https://grad.ucla.edu/asis/stusup/index.html), and the Graduate Division Fellowship Resources (<https://grad.ucla.edu/asis/infoserv/fcltycon.htm>).

During your grant, you as a Fulbrighter will meet, work, live with, and learn from the people of the host country, sharing daily experiences. The program facilitates cultural exchange through direct interaction on an individual basis in the classroom, field, home, and in routine tasks, allowing you, the grantee to gain an appreciation of others’ viewpoints and beliefs, the way they do things, and the way they think. Through engagement in the community, you will interact with your hosts on a one-to-one basis in an atmosphere of openness, academic integrity, and intellectual freedom, thereby promoting mutual understanding and enriching you both educationally and culturally.

**In summary:**

1. Fulbright is good for you!
2. Grant lengths and dates for Fulbright fellowships vary by country: consult the specific country summary for details.
3. You may apply for a Fulbright as a graduating senior and as a recent BS/BA recipient. You of course also may apply as a Graduate student, and in the last couple of years of your doctoral research. Your "gap year" may actually have extended for several years, because "life threw you a curve ball". That is OK: Young professionals, including writers, creative and performing artists, journalists, and those in law, business, and other professional fields competitive candidates who have up to 5 years of professional study and/or experience in the field in which they are applying can very well apply, and are given as fair as chance as any other applicant. If your "gap year" has extended longer than 5 years, then you should apply for the Fulbright Specialist or the Fulbright Scholar fellowships.
4. Regardless at what stage you are, your application must demonstrate feasibility, and your capacity for independent study or research. You also must show a general knowledge of the history, culture, and current events of the countries to which you are applying, and a compelling understanding of the win/win of cultural and educational exchange. Graduate Division and the Graduate Writing Center are here to help you reach YOUR star!