

How to Use the Fulbright Program to Internationalize Your Law School

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Many law schools face a difficult conflict: more demand for international opportunities for students and faculty, but fewer financial resources with which to do it. One way to begin to fill that gap is by utilizing the many resources available through the Fulbright program. Paul Simon, in “I Know What I Know,” sings “Aren’t you the woman who was recently given a Fulbright?” to which the response is, “Didn’t I meet you at the cinematographer’s party?” In other words, Fulbrights are hip and prestigious. As indeed they are, with good reason. But they are also not that difficult to get. In this essay, I provide an overview of how the Fulbright program can be useful to law schools, and highlight some of the most important opportunities.

First, let’s challenge some myths:

Myth 1: Fulbright is only for faculty who can commit to going abroad for substantial periods of time.

Fact: The Fulbright Specialist program is designed for people who want to go abroad for two to six weeks.

Myth 2: Fulbrights are useful only for scholars on sabbatical leave.

Fact: Many universities are able to support scholars who have been awarded Fulbrights and are not going to be on sabbatical. A common plan is to allow scholars to keep the Fulbright stipends and their salaries, minus the cost of hiring someone to teach the scholars’ courses. The program addresses this on the website, with great ideas for encouraging administrators to support Fulbright grants, whether or not the scholar will be on sabbatical.

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Myth 3: If you only speak English, you are very restricted in your options.

Fact: Even aside from the obvious Commonwealth countries, graduate and professional education is conducted in English in many parts of the world. Within Europe, higher education is increasingly international. My Fulbright Specialist assignment in 2010 was at University of Padua in a consortium program that included students from all over the world; English was the language of instruction. In many Scandinavian countries, everyone speaks English and uses it daily in academic settings. I have had Fulbright assignments in an M.A. Program in Indonesia and a law school in Israel; in both settings, classes were conducted in English.

Fulbright: An Overview

CIES (Council for International Exchange of Scholars) administers the Fulbright program for faculty and professionals. It is helpful to think of Fulbrights as falling into two categories: Americans going abroad and international scholars coming here. Both types of programs can enrich law schools. Even though CIES does not support student exchanges, law students benefit from international professors teaching at their law schools, and from the international experience of their own professors.¹

American Faculty Abroad

With some minor additions, Americans go abroad under two programs: “Core” Fulbrights, and short-term or “Specialist” Fulbrights.

Core Fulbrights

These are the grants people immediately think of when they think “Fulbright.” The projects last for three to twelve months, and can entail teaching, research, or a combination of the two activities. For many assignments, Fulbright provides financial support for dependents (including, for example, airfare and school fees).

The application process for Core Fulbrights is a bit cumbersome but well worth the work. You need to start about two years before you hope to go. There is a single annual application deadline, in August. You apply for one project in one country. For example, if you are hoping to go on a six-month project beginning in September of 2014 or January of 2015, you would need to meet the August 2013 deadline, which would mean that you would want to begin thinking and planning by January of 2013 at the latest.

1. Information on Fulbright programs for students is available at <http://www.iie.org/en/Students>.

To get started, go to http://www.cies.org/us_scholars/us_awards.² What part of the world would you like to work in? Maybe an Italian colleague you met at a conference wants to do a collaborative project, or maybe a research site beckons in Cameroon. Perhaps you have always dreamed of spending a year in China. Are you interested in lecturing, doing research, or both? What language skills do you need in the countries that interest you? Although the website allows you to search by discipline, I suggest you not do that. Searching for “law” will ignore other disciplines for which you might qualify, such as history, political science, or American studies, not to mention that ubiquitous catch-all, “all disciplines,” a grant category offered by almost all countries. “All disciplines” awards allow you to propose a project in a field not explicitly listed.

Once you have focused your ideas, get in touch with the program officer listed for that country. These people are invaluable and welcome your inquiries. Tell them about your interests and ask for their advice. For example, if you are interested in East Asia, it is useful to know that there is much less competition for South Korea than for Japan. Officers can help to decode the sometimes confusing language in program descriptions. (An Italian law school once posted a request for someone to teach “bioethics, torts, and bankruptcy;” it turns out they meant *or*, not *and*.) They can alert you to peculiarities of the programs that catch your eye, or to ongoing relationships between particular American and international universities that amount to monopolies. Remember, this is not like making simultaneous submissions of a law review article—you have only one opportunity each year, so you need to be strategic.

Several parts of the CIES web site offer tips in completing the application, especially the Tips for Applying, Content Guidelines (which also includes sample paragraphs from successful Project Statements), and Scholar Stories and Scholar Lists, all found at http://www.cies.org/us_scholars/us_awards. Talking to someone who has had a successful application is also invaluable.

Specialist Program

These grants used to be called “Senior Specialist” to underline the idea that they are short-term and require experienced scholars who can “hit the ground running.” Applicants must have at least five years experience (it appears that a combination of teaching and professional legal experience fulfills that requirement).

2. Unfortunately, the catalog of opportunities is only posted from February through August, but you can find previous catalogs in hard copy from your institution’s international studies coordinator.

Specialist Fulbrights differ from Core Fulbrights in three important ways:

- They exist only to support the host country in teaching or curriculum support, not for research that serves the applicant's goals (although you will almost certainly find time to do your own research, should you wish, and nothing prevents you from staying on in the region when your assignment concludes);
- They are short-term, from two to six weeks;
- You apply to be added to a specialist roster, based on your particular expertise, not for a specific country or project. This makes the application much less time-consuming.

Applications are accepted throughout the year, and once a peer review committee has accepted your application, you will be included on a specialist roster for five years. Any institution in countries that support the Fulbright program may then invite you. But passive waiting will probably get you nowhere: You need to initiate the invitation process, as I'll discuss below. Fulbright pays a per diem honorarium of \$200 for every day you are "on assignment," and pays your travel as well. The host institution's only financial obligation is to provide housing.³ Under those conditions, who wouldn't want you?

As part of this program, you can teach all or part of a class, provide support to build curriculum, run workshops, consult with graduate students, and so on. My first time, I was completely in charge of a six-week course in Indonesia, from choosing the texts to grading the exams. On my second specialist assignment, in Sweden, I helped run a workshop on bioethics for faculty, and consulted with doctoral students. On my third, I guest lectured in two different graduate level bioethics courses.⁴

Sit down and do the application whenever you have a spare afternoon. You don't need to have a specific country or project in mind. Getting references and going through the process will take a few months, and from the time you are entered into the roster, you have five years to make two trips (at least two years apart). Then start thinking about where you want to go. The website has good ideas and resources for making connections at "Tips for Roster Candidates."⁵ Remember, you are virtually a gift to the institution you visit, so don't be shy about inviting yourself. Maybe somewhere in your university there are colleagues from the country or an institution that interests you. Maybe you met

3. Some institutions cannot afford to provide housing, but you needn't let that stop you. You and your host can simply agree to "bargain around the contract." In Indonesia, I paid \$500 for six weeks at a guesthouse, with two delicious meals a day. In Sweden, a colleague who was invited to Uppsala had to make her own housing arrangements, but they equaled only two days' of honoraria. On the other hand, I had a lovely little flat in Linköping, Sweden, courtesy of the University, and a suite in a university residence in Padua.
4. I was fortunate to be "grandmothered in" when the rules changed in recent years restricting the number of Fulbright awards an person can win. Check the website for the latest policies.
5. Available at http://www.cies.org/specialists/Joining_The_Roster/Tips_For_Roster_Candidates.htm.

someone at an international conference. Maybe you have admired someone's work from afar and would like to spend time at his or her school. Perhaps a school has a center or institute in your area of expertise. Even a completely "cold" overture based on information from a school's website can result in an invitation (that's how I got invited to Padua and how my colleague Heidi Gorovitz Robertson got invited to Iceland). Until you actually nail down an invitation, you can and should pursue several leads at once.

Smaller Programs

Within the Core program, there are Distinguished Chairs, with an earlier deadline and more prestigious awards, usually in Canada and Western Europe. There are also seminars for administrators, a German Studies program, and the extremely competitive New Century Scholars program, a collaborative effort organized around a single theme.

International Faculty Here

Fulbright offers a number of opportunities to "internationalize" your school by hosting scholars from other countries. These programs change from year to year, so keep checking back.

If your law school is in an historically black university or an Hispanic-serving institution, the Scholar-in-Residence program can offer support in a number of different ways. The Occasional Lecturer Fund pays travel expenses for any international scholar currently serving on a Fulbright program in the U.S. to come lecture at your school. In some years, the program is not as timely as one could wish in getting the list of current scholars posted online but keep checking. (That's also a nice perk for an international Fulbright scholar visiting your school, as it gives her or him the opportunity to travel to other institutions. Currently, there is support available only for one trip per visiting scholar but if the trips are to minority-serving institutions that cap is higher.)

Over time, Fulbright has fielded programs for different sorts of scholars. A few years ago, under the Direct Access to the Muslim World program, I was able to put together a consortium of four Cleveland institutions to invite a Turkish scholar who is an expert on Islamic bioethics. That program is now defunct, but the EU Scholar-in-Residence Program allows institutions to invite a scholar from any country in the European Union to visit for a semester. The scholar should specialize in "EU affairs" and be able to teach a seminar, give guest lectures, consult with students, and so on. As I write this, we are enjoying the visit of Christine Riefa from Brunel University in London, who is offering a very popular course on consumer protection law in the EU.

Conclusion

The Fulbright program is truly a meritocracy: From my experience on two Fulbright peer review panels I can testify that someone from a regional public university is just as likely to win a grant as someone from an Ivy League

school. Recently, Cleveland State University tied with Cornell for having the third largest group of Fulbright scholars in any U.S. university. What makes that happen is staff and administrative support, and someone who is keeping an eye on Fulbright opportunities and buttonholing colleagues to apply.

The other necessity is patience and perseverance, sometimes in large doses. For a program dedicated to supporting academics, Fulbright can be surprisingly insensitive to the demands of the academic calendar. And it is a bureaucracy, with all the annoyances pertaining thereto. Sometimes it requires repeated phone calls to uncover a glitch that has been holding up the works. Program officers can be away from their desks, phones, and e-mail for days at a time. But these are minor annoyances. Getting involved with Fulbright, either as a host or a traveler, is one of the most satisfying things an academic can do. This summer I got to teach bioethics to students from countries as diverse as China and Argentina, in the world's second oldest university, where Galileo himself taught for twelve years. My colleagues came from Italy, Israel, and Russia. As always, I learned so much more than I taught, and much of that learning will enrich my bioethics course this fall with my own law students. And all this without a penny from my institution.