



Outcome Assessment of the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program

Executive Report

May 2002

Introduction

The Fulbright Educational Exchange Program, established in 1946, is the U.S. government's flagship international educational exchange program. The program is designed to:

- Increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.
- Strengthen the ties that unite the United States with other nations.
- Promote international cooperation for education and cultural advancement.
- Assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world.*

Since its inception, the Fulbright Program has provided more than 250,000 participants from the United States and around the world with the opportunity to teach, conduct research, study, live, and work abroad. The U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program, one of several programs under the Fulbright umbrella, provides grants for American college and university faculty, as well as for professionals and independent scholars, to lecture and conduct research in 140 countries throughout the world.

In 1999 the Office of Policy and Evaluation of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State contracted with SRI International to assess and document the outcomes and impact of the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program.** Specifically, SRI was asked to:

- Ascertain — in quantitative and qualitative terms — whether the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program is achieving its legislative goals.
- Assess the broader impacts of the program on individuals and institutions both in the United States and in the Fulbright Scholars' host countries.
- Assess and document the contribution of the "Fulbright Scholar experience" to the professional and personal lives, activities, and achievements of program alumni.

In 2001, SRI surveyed a stratified random sample of 1,004 U.S. Fulbright Scholar alumni whose grants began between 1976 and 1999. Scholars were notified of the survey by e-mail, and a total of 801 Scholar alumni — 80 percent — completed the questionnaire either on the Web or by hard copy.

Overview of Study Results

The SRI assessment of the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program found strong quantitative and qualitative evidence that the program is achieving its legislative mandate of promoting mutual understanding and cooperation between the United States and other nations and that it has diverse and often powerful impacts not only on the Scholars themselves, but on their colleagues, students, friends, and families.

Thus, the real power of the experiences is in their *multiplier effects*. The study indicates that during their grant period, the Scholars teach, collaborate in research with colleagues and students, organize workshops, do media interviews, socialize with neighbors, and in many other ways interact with a variety of people in their host countries. When they depart, they leave behind books and other materials, changed curricula, new ideas and new perspectives, and increased understanding of the United States and American culture.

* Public Law 584, The Fulbright Act, 1946.

** In addition to the U.S. Scholar Program, on which this assessment is based, there also are Fulbright exchange programs for U.S. students, non-U.S. students, and non-U.S. scholars.

Broad goal and legislative mandate of the Fulbright Program: "to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries."

The real power of the grants is in their *multiplier effects*.

Scholars and their families share new knowledge and perspectives with professional and personal contacts in the United States and their host countries, both during the grant and for many years thereafter.

After they return to the United States, not only do friendships and professional relationships established in the host countries tend to continue, but Scholars — and their families — also bring their own new knowledge and perspectives back to share with their U.S. colleagues, students, friends, and communities. Thus, through the Scholars' personal as well as professional contacts, the grants inevitably affect many individuals in both the United States and their host countries — immediately and for many years to come.

Two themes stood out in particular in Scholars' comments: the capacity of the Fulbright experience to increase Americans' knowledge of and engagement with the world, and the power of personal relationships to increase mutual understanding. The following comments are two among many that express these views. They are particularly compelling in view of the events of September 11, 2001.

"The Fulbright Scholar Program increases knowledge, tolerance, curiosity, and, most of all, delight in differences. Fulbright is a leader in this endeavor."

"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."

How the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program Serves the National Interest and Promotes Mutual Understanding

A number of themes emerged from Scholars' responses about how they believe the Fulbright Scholar Program serves the national interest. Some Scholars focused on the benefits of the program to U.S. citizens, others on its benefits to the citizens of host countries. Overall, eight major — often overlapping — themes emerged. Scholars believe the program serves the national interest because it:

- Promotes greater mutual/international understanding.
- Puts a face on U.S. policies and culture, often counteracting mistaken or negative views derived from mass media or other sources.
- Creates goodwill for the United States.
- Educates/explains U.S. viewpoints to future elites and leaders of other countries.
- Improves the education, research skills, and knowledge base of people in other countries.
- Improves the quality of U.S. higher education by bringing a more international perspective.
- Helps American leaders/scholars become more engaged with the world.
- Helps Americans in general become more engaged with the world.

Scholars also described a variety of ways in which their Fulbright experiences led to increased mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries. These include:

- Personal contacts they have had with people in their host countries, both at the time of the grant and since that time.
- Their own increased professional knowledge of the host countries/regions.
- Current professional activities relating to international issues.
- Collaborative research and projects with scholars from their countries/regions.
- Increased emphasis in teaching (in existing or new courses) about other countries' cultures, issues, or perspectives.
- Assistance provided to foreign students or faculty that increased knowledge, skills, or opportunities.

- Assistance provided to foreign students or faculty in arranging professional exchanges, joint conferences and workshops, and exchanges of research data and materials.

Scholars' Grant Activities Are Diverse

In keeping with the design of the U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program in recent years, more than twice as many Scholars in the study received lecturing grants as received research grants. Most of the Scholars were tenured academicians at the time of their grants, and most of the host institutions were colleges or universities. Grant duration ranged from one to 12 months, with a mean duration of 6.5 months. Grants were more likely to be in the social sciences or arts and humanities than in physical and life sciences.

Scholars participated in diverse professional, social, community, and volunteer activities beyond the basic lecturing or research focus of their grants.

Scholars participated in diverse professional activities beyond the basic lecturing or research focus of their grants. Some 45 percent or more reported that they:

- Wrote or edited articles or books.
- Advised students.
- Provided technical advice to colleagues and host institutions.
- Participated in professional conferences.

They also:

- Reviewed and developed curricula.
- Translated materials.
- Wrote grant proposals or helped others write them.
- Served on faculty committees.
- Organized professional events.
- Did paid or unpaid consulting.
- Participated in creative or performing arts.
- Served on faculty committees.

In addition, grantees were active in their neighborhoods and communities:

- 98 percent interacted with people from the host country by engaging in at least some form of media, community, and/or social activities beyond their professional activities.
- 90 percent participated in social activities with students, faculty, or other professional colleagues.
- Nearly 70 percent participated in social activities with neighbors or other non-professional contacts.
- 30 to 40 percent participated in community events or volunteer activities, were interviewed by the media, or made presentations to community organizations.

Scholars Build Knowledge and Long-Term Relationships with Host Institutions and Foreign Colleagues

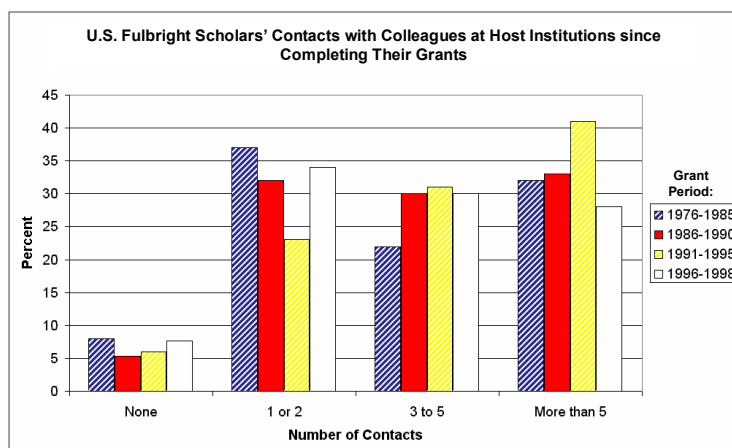
Fulbright Scholars said they initiated a wide range of changes in their host institutions during their grants. Most common was imparting new knowledge about their field of specialization to their colleagues, reported by nearly 80 percent of the Scholars.

Perhaps more important given the focus of the Fulbright Program, however, is the fact that many Scholars have maintained relationships with colleagues and host institutions after returning from

their grants. And many reported that they have increased the interest on the part of foreign colleagues and friends in visiting the United States.

Almost all Scholars have maintained professional and personal relationships with individuals from their host countries since completing their grants.

- 75 percent of Scholars have continued to collaborate with colleagues from their host countries or institutions since completing their grants.
- Nearly 70 percent have initiated professional exchanges of people since completing their grants.
- Nearly 70 percent have been visited in the United States by colleagues or friends from their host countries.
- Nearly 60 percent have revisited their host countries, with more than 40 percent returning to participate in conferences or seminars.



Source: SRI International, U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program Survey, 2001.

Scholars Make U.S. Campuses and Communities More International

Almost all Scholars reported ways in which the Fulbright experience has had a significant internationalizing effect on their home institutions and has helped to broaden the horizons of their communities:

- 73 percent have incorporated aspects of their Fulbright experience into courses and teaching methods.
- 64 percent have broadened the international aspects of their teaching and research.
- 51 percent have become more involved with colleagues from other countries.
- 51 percent have become more involved in research relating to their host countries or regions.

Scholars also shared their Fulbright experiences locally through participation in various media and community activities. Slightly over half gave speeches, lectures, or presentations for community or civic organizations, or were interviewed by news media after returning from their grants.

Scholars Are Enriched and Inspired by Fulbright Experiences

Scholars believe that their Fulbright grants greatly enriched their academic and professional lives. Large majorities reported that their overseas experience led to professional expertise they otherwise would not have developed, enhanced their professional credentials, and contributed to greater insight into their field.

Almost all of the Scholars have produced professional works that incorporated knowledge, information, materials, or data obtained during their grants:

- 76 percent gave papers or presentations at scholarly or professional meetings.
- 71 percent published papers in refereed journals.

The diversity of other professional works stemming from Fulbright grants is also impressive — they include novels, poems, documentary films or videos, photographs, ethnic music performances, computer software, and art exhibitions.

And the vast majority of the Scholars retain their interest in international issues. Some 85 percent have participated in other international activities since completing their grants, including conferences in their host countries, conferences that work to foster international cooperation, and conferences in the United States about their host countries.

Scholars Express High Levels of Satisfaction with Fulbright

Without exception, the Scholars reported that they found their Fulbright experiences to be valuable and that they are proud to have been Fulbright Scholars. Ninety-seven percent agreed that they would like to obtain another Fulbright grant. This level of approbation is extremely rare in program evaluation research.

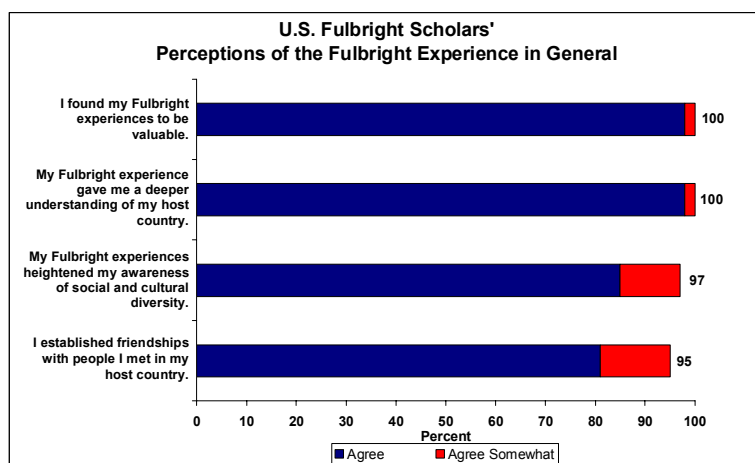
All respondents reported that their Fulbright experiences gave them a deeper understanding of their host countries, they found their Fulbright experiences to be valuable, and they are proud to have been Fulbright Scholars.

In addition, almost all Scholars agreed that their Fulbright experiences heightened their awareness of social and cultural diversity among different nations, gave them a deeper understanding of international issues in general, and contributed to a greater international focus in their careers.

It is hard to imagine a program receiving a higher level of endorsement from its participants. Scholars believe that they — as well as their families — have benefited from the Fulbright Scholar Program, and they believe that the program has also benefited the many others they have come in contact with or otherwise influenced during and since their grants.

In the words of one U.S. Fulbright Scholar:

“An excellent program and an excellent experience. I wish everyone could participate. A great way to shrink the world!”



Source: SRI International, U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program Survey, 2001.

Highlights of U.S. Fulbright Scholar Feedback

"I feel a deeper connection to the region; the friendships are both more extensive and deeper than previously. I have returned at least once every year since the Fulbright."

"I am definitely more international in outlook and try to project that outlook to my students and colleagues. I strongly encourage my students to seek international experiences."

"It is in our national interest to continually nurture a citizenry which is global in its outlook and understanding. Nothing can substitute for the quality of international learning that results from the face-to-face, personal contact between individuals..."

"By encouraging some of the best brains in the United States to devote serious attention to the outside, it has greatly enhanced our nation's understanding of ourselves and of our global environment."

"Despite the existence of the Internet, global telephones, satellite TV, etc., we cannot understand other countries without living there. And people in other countries cannot understand us without living in the United States. A program such as Fulbright that enables people to understand another culture and country in depth is invaluable to mutual understanding and mutual understanding is crucial to peace and security, as well as our prosperity in a global economy."

"Helps to humanize Americans to foreign countries, especially those suspicious of us. Breaks down stereotypes of Americans and of simplistic foreign views of Americans. We are ambassadors of not only goodwill, but more importantly, shared humanity."

"The Fulbright Scholar Program does more to create mutual understanding — and also simultaneously to advance the frontiers of knowledge — through open communication...between opinion leaders and researchers in the United States and other countries than any other single activity of the U.S. government or NGO programs supported by it...An expansion of this program would be one of the most efficient possible uses of federal funds in enhancing our national interests around the world."



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