

*MY
FULBRIGHT
EXPERIENCE*

The Mutual Educational Exchange Program or the **Fulbright Program**, named in honor of Senator J. William Fulbright, was established by the U.S. Congress on August 1, 1946. It is now administered under the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended by Public Law 87256. This Act provides the legislative authority for the Program. The main objective of this Act is “to enable the government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries ... and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations, between the United States and other countries of the world.”

The program operates in more than 140 countries. Binational commissions were established by executive agreements in 51 countries. The J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (BFS) in Washington, DC, comprises 12 educational and public leaders appointed by the President of the United States. It has statutory responsibility for the selection of all academic exchange grantees, the establishment of policies and procedures, and the supervision of the Fulbright Program worldwide. Motivated by the need to change the U.S.’s traditional isolationist policy, the Fulbright Program developed into an indispensable resource for scholars and institutions all over the world. Today, international expertise is even more vital than ever as the realities of the postCold war era become far more complex and the emerging international system increases political and economic linkages throughout the world.

Since its inception, the Fulbright Program has welcomed more than 270,000 researchers, lecturers and students from the United States and the rest of the world. Many have assumed leadership roles, including Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, heads of state and prime ministers, artists and ambassadors, governors and senators, professors and physicians, supreme court justices and CEOs. These Fulbrighters, past and present, have enabled the Fulbright Program to become the world’s largest and most prestigious scholarly exchange program.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the **Fulbright Program** offers opportunities for recent graduates, postgraduate candidates, and developing professionals and artists to conduct career-launching study and research abroad as well as for researchers and lecturers in any fields of arts and sciences. Since the establishment of the Program, about 90,000 grantees from the United States and 180,000 grantees from other countries have benefited from the Fulbright experience. The Program awards approximately 4,800 grants for U.S. and 4,800 for non-U.S. applicants annually and currently operates in over 150 countries worldwide.

The **Fulbright Commission in Hungary** was established in January 1992, after a binational agreement was signed between the governments of Hungary and the United States in December, 1990 and untermintedly extended in March, 2007. The Hungarian government has acknowledged the importance of the Fulbright Program and also helps financially. The **Ministry of Education and Culture** provides the office space for the Commission and significantly contributes toward the program costs.

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Foreword

In accordance with the fundamental goal of the Fulbright Program - mutual understanding - the Executive Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of Hungary has established the authority of the Commission to conduct a program of educational and cultural exchange between the two countries using funds made available by both governments. Given the overall mission of the global Fulbright Program, the Commission offers qualified Hungarian and American citizens the opportunity to exchange significant knowledge and educational experience in the sciences and arts, especially in fields relevant to the two countries. Participants thereby contribute to a deeper understanding of U.S.-Hungarian relations and broaden the means by which the two societies can further their understanding of each other's cultures.

The Hungarian-American Fulbright Commission supports educational and research programs which are in harmony with the spirit of the signing partner states and which receive financial support from the two governments. Besides government funding the Commission seeks donations from the business community, from foundations and from other benefactors as well.

In keeping with the spirit of the Fulbright Program, special preference is given to candidates who appear best able to share their newly acquired experience and knowledge upon their return. Preference is also given to qualified applicants who have not had extensive overseas experience prior.

The Fulbright Program offers the following grant possibilities for Hungarian candidates:

- *graduate student grants,*
- *lecturer grants,*
- *research grants,*
- *co-sponsored and supplementary grants,*
- *travel only grants,*
- *teacher exchange opportunities,*
- *other special grants.*

The usual duration of the graduate student grants is one or two academic semesters. Grants to lecturers are for one or two semesters, to researchers for three to nine months.

Faithful to the spirit of the Fulbright Program, grants are given to candidates who are devoted to sharing their experiences and knowledge in the most effective way after returning to Hungary either in academic or in business life.

In order to secure fair screening of applications, the Commission has appointed its own Selection Committee and established its own selection procedures, which include three stages of evaluating the candidates:

- 1. eligibility screening conducted by the staff of the Commission;*
- 2. evaluation of project proposals by Hungarian and American experts;*
- 3. interviewing of selected candidates by the Executive Director, an American Embassy representative and Board Members.*

Each year the Fulbright Commission organizes a meeting for the newly returned Hungarian grantees and invites them to give a summary of their grant period. These short presentations demonstrate the manifold value set of the program and the achievements of our grantees.

Those who work hard on supporting the program and are involved in the selection of the Hungarian participants can get a first hand feedback on the success of the grant period from the participants by their short presentations.

In this book the reader will find reports by Hungarian Fulbright grantees - lecturers, researchers, students, exchange teachers. As the director of the program I'm very proud of our grantees' achievements, and I strongly believe that their grant period can be (and has been) a life changing experience. Above the professional activities our grantees have done a great job as Hungary's representatives in the United States, fulfilled their mission to promote mutual understanding. In most of the cases the grant period is only the beginning of a much longer and wider cooperation between the Hungarian grantee and his/her institution and the partners (persons and institutions) in the U.S.

It is my pleasure to share the experience of the Hungarian Fulbright grantees with the reader(s) of these reports. The Fulbright Program is as timely, its mission is as important in our days as it was in 1946, the year of its conception.

This year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the initiation of this global exchange program in Hungary. I wish many-many more happy anniversaries for the Fulbright program and its alumni.

November 28, 2008

Dr. Huba Brückner
executive director

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