

Fulbright Advisory Committee Annual Report AY 2025 - 2026

Chair(s): Michelle Cude, College of Education

Leslie Pusey, Research, Economic Development, and Innovation (REDI)

Members: Bud Clarke, John Hulse, Sasha Kokhan (Oleksandr), Jennifer Coffman, Erika Metzler Sawin, Holly Yanacek, JY Zhou, Corey Hickerson

Updated charge: *This committee is charged with supporting student and faculty Fulbright participation by promoting the program across the colleges, advising on institutional involvement, and communicating developments with their respective units.*

New Business: Welcomed new member, Corey Hickerson, Center for Global Engagement

Summary of Annual Activity

After significant disruptions to the Fulbright programs in 2025 (including most all international exchange opportunities), Fulbright has nonetheless persevered and is returning to more stable footing.

- Both the Fulbright U.S. Student Program and Fulbright U.S. Scholars Program involve considerable forecasting, planning, application and logistical preparation, and meaningful reflection, and therefore we saw less participation in the application cycles for the 2026-2027 competitions (deadlines were Sept/Oct 2025), but there is still good news to share in the updates section!
- Currently, given the shift in the JMU provost position—and the “rebuilding” at the Fulbright staffing level, we decided it was not the best year to pursue a Scholar-in-Residence (SIR) which requires the full support and backing of individual institutions. Similarly, with the SIR on a different timeline (June 1) than other Fulbright Scholar programs, we don’t feel prepared to offer the support needed. However, we look forward to next year’s SIR cycle and have identified an eager department.

Update on Fulbright Scholar Awards (aka Faculty Awards)

- 1 recipient of the 2025-26 International Education Administrators Award (IEA) for Germany program: U.S.-Germany International Education Administrators Award **Dr. Myles Surrentt**, Associate Vice President for Career, Experiential Learning, Transitions, and Accessibility
- 3 Fulbright U.S. Scholars: 1 Awardee and 2 Alternates
Dr. Peter Zazzali, Professor of Theatre: Acting and Theatre Studies (College of Visual & Performing Arts CVPA; School of Theatre & Dance) who secured a Fulbright Scholar Award to Malaysia (Congratulations!)
Dr. Ángel A. García Jr., Assistant Professor, Ethnogeology & Karst Science (Department of Geology & Environmental Science, College of Sciences & Mathematics CSM) was named an Alternate to Brazil under the Scholar Award process
Dr. Shin Ji Kang, Professor of Education (Professor of Early, Elementary, and Reading Education; College of Education COE) was named an Alternate to Uzbekistan under the Scholar Award process
- 1 Fulbright Visiting Scholar Award to JMU
Professor Bukuriye Hoxha, a Professor of Thermoenergetics and Renewable Energy at the University of Prishtina in Kosovo joined JMU’s Center for the Advancement of

Sustainable Energy (CASE), under the mentorship of Professor Jonathan J. Miles to contribute to one of the largest wind energy projects in the region. This experience strengthened her research and analytical skills while deepening her understanding of how academic work can drive real-world impact in the renewable energy sector.

<https://www.uskeb.org/spotlight/fulbright-visiting-scholar-program-spotlight-bukurije-hoxha>

Update on Fulbright U.S. Student Program and affiliated programs

- The Fulbright-Canada MITACS Research Internship (a separate, undergraduate research program) saw 4 JMU applicants with two moving on to interviews (semifinalists) and 1 who was offered a position.
- JMU's first Fulbright-Canada MITACS awardee completed their research internship in August 2025
- The US-UK Summer Fulbright Award (undergraduate exchange program for US freshmen and sophomores) saw two applicants who moved forward in the competition, but neither advanced to awardee status. (The program has a 2-3% success rate)
- The US Teaching in Austria program (USTA) saw two applicants who both have been named **Alternates**. In this program, it's not uncommon for Alternates to move forward as Awardees/Scholars close to the start date. The committee is rooting for our two candidates and will encourage them to reapply if necessary.
- Three Fulbright grantees for the 2024-2025 cycle, reapplied last spring 2025 to teach for a second year in their respective countries and all were successful (two in Taiwan and one in Uzbekistan)
- Two of last year's (applied for the 2025-2026 grant) Fulbright U.S. Student Program applicants who were "unsuccessful" during the Fulbright disruptions, went on to secure Peace Corps placements (Philippines and Thailand) with one securing a 4-month teaching abroad opportunity in Uzbekistan before Peace Corps placement
- Leslie reported that only 5 students and alumni applied for the 2026-2027 Cycle (deadline was early October 2025). Interest waned as the news about federal priorities changed, with several would-be applicants sharing concerns over privacy, safety/security, continuity, project proposals, etc.
- Applications included 4 ETAs (Kosovo, Bulgaria, Germany, Romania) and 1 Study/Research (Ireland): three semifinalists (Kosovo, Romania, Ireland)
- A May 2026 graduate was awarded an ETA position in Kosovo and a Peace Corps placement in Vietnam.
- During the Spring 2026 meeting, Leslie shared updates on country-specific and overall Fulbright trends via the information provided at the 2027-2028 Fulbright U.S. Student Program Launch
- The Fulbright U.S. Student Program 2027-2028 Cycle (deadline October 2026) is off to a strong start, with 14 interested candidates already starting applications!

Future Work Planned:

- Michelle and Leslie will promote unique, commission-led programs under the Fulbright Foundation for Scholarly Exchange (Taiwan) including the English Teacher Trainer Programs and the English Teaching Flagship (ETF) Program. These programs are open to faculty and English teaching professionals. Applications for these programs are due in early March.

- Leslie will continue promoting the Fulbright Canada MITACS Research program to encourage students to pursue international undergraduate research opportunities, and as a means to create a future Fulbright U.S. Student Program applicant pipeline.
- Leslie will continue outreach across campus through events, advising hours, and classroom visits with the Honors College, the Reddix Center for First-Generation Students, the Center for Global Engagement, the Community Engagement & Volunteer Center, the Transfer Student Success & Advising office, in-house programs such as the First Year Research Experience (FYRE), and now as a new First-Year Advisor.