

Example of Letter to the Editor to *Fulbright Chronicles*

Institutional Impediments to Fulbright Awards

To the Editor,

There is no question that receiving a Fulbright Scholar Award for teaching and/or research can enhance the career of a faculty member and elevate the prestige of the applicant. It can also improve our sensitivity to those who are different from us and promote mutual understanding in a world that at times seems more divided than ever. Our views on our respective disciplines and our scholarly activities can become enriched and ultimately improve the content of courses we deliver to our students. That being said, I see three major impediments to applying for and ultimately receiving a Fulbright Scholar Award.

First, teaching internationally is not really valued, especially at research intensive universities. The overemphasis on scholarship and the obtaining of grants to fund one's research lead faculty to make career decisions that by necessity devalues teaching. This is especially shortsighted in view of the fact that many complex research questions today often require a level of international collaboration that was unheard of just 10 years ago. Such collaborations are often spawned from international teaching arrangements that produce mutually beneficial intellectual stimulation for institutions that send and receive scholars. This problem could be solved if 25 percent of the evaluation for tenure and promotion was based on a requirement that faculty engage in some type of teaching/research internationally with programs like Fulbright. This would create a more open and diverse university and would suddenly expand the cultural environment and learning experiences of both faculty and students.

Second, at many universities, teaching and doing research internationally are currently collections of fragmented and often unrelated programs. Clearly, there must be more opportunities for faculty to teach and do research internationally and an organizational structure must be present to promote and incentivize such activities. Fulbright opportunities, visiting professorships, professor exchange programs and faculty led programs are helpful but not enough. Universities need to do more to enhance their own funding streams to create more and better opportunities for faculty to teach internationally.

Third, at some universities, Fulbright Scholar Awards and other international exchange programs are viewed by administrators as a hindrance to already tight budgetary constraints. The loss of a faculty member on a paid sabbatical for a semester or an entire year places a burden upon some institutions to make up the difference by hiring someone else to fill the position. I know of some colleagues at other institutions who sadly were denied sabbatical requests for a Fulbright owing to these budgetary reasons. This is very short sighted in view of the fact that Fulbrights are considered so prestigious that institutions are ranked on how many of these awards are received by their respective faculty. Administrators need to better understand the goals and benefits of premier scholar exchange programs like Fulbright.

These impediments to the Fulbright Scholar program can be resolved by more creative thinking by leaders in our institutions of higher learning. At stake is our ability to more fully realize the enormous power and potential of exchange programs like Fulbright.

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Word count = 502