

BUILDING A STRONGER GLOBAL FULBRIGHT COMMUNITY

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We founded this journal believing that Fulbright experiences have a profound effect on the participants and those experiences have an enduring but often unexamined impact. We also believe that the Global Fulbright Community has untapped potential to make more progress in achieving its lofty goals of promoting mutual understanding, advancing knowledge, and improving lives worldwide.

Here at the *Chronicles*, we are interested in finding ways to strengthen the Fulbright community to better achieve the Fulbright goals. Now, 75 years after its establishment and with more than 400,000 participants from some 160 countries, we think that there should be a more concerted effort to understand the Fulbright Program's impact and to encourage more efforts to strengthen the global Fulbright Community, especially by enhancing the communications, and connections among us. We believe that this will lead to a more engaged and impactful community.

As far as we understand, our collective knowledge of and links to the global alumni are modest. Estimates suggest that there are well-established links to just 15 percent of our alumni and consequently limited engagement from Fulbright alumni. There are some parallels with another iconic US government program, the Peace Corps. They, too, have limited connections to and engagement from the approximately 250,000 alumni of that program. This low level of connection results from the Fulbright Programs focus on selecting and supporting the program participants to a far greater extent than assessing its enduring impact and keeping alumni engaged in advancing the Fulbright Programs goals.

A comparison with college and universities connections with their alumni suggests that the Fulbright Program could be much more connected to their alumni. Generally, US universities are better connected to their alumni than global universities. For elite US universities, these closer connections can generate ongoing alumni engagement at the level of 50 percent or higher. While these percentages of alumni engagement are much lower for universities in other regions, global universities are increasingly realizing that ongoing connections with and engagement from their alumni is essential to their sustainability.

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Because the Fulbright Program does not have strong links to our global alumni, our community's potential is weakened and our ability to assess its enduring impact is limited. In London this past July, Rob Ellis (of the *Fulbrighter* and the *Chronicles* publication editor), helped organize a workshop for five national alumni associations (including Aiden Warren, an associate editor and representing the Australian Alumni Association), a few national Fulbright commissions, as well as representatives from the US State Department and the International Institute of Education, which administers many of the Fulbright Programs. This workshop sought to develop ideas and strategies for strengthening our global Fulbright community and deepening connections among us. In particular, the workshop agreed to develop a better database of Fulbright alumni, as well as sharing contact information with alumni associations for new Fulbrighters so that national alumni associations can connect with and be a resource before and after the newest Fulbrighters participate in the program. We are hopeful that this London meeting will be an important step in strengthening the connections among our alumni, and we believe that it will lead to discernible improvements in the Fulbright Programs overall impact.

In this issue, an interdisciplinary trio of Australian Fulbrighters (Iain Butterworth, Angela Heise, and Jon Adams) discuss Australia's Fulbright Leadership Development program that aims to help alumni become "... reflective, technical, and tenacious lifelong learners and change agents," and "... to act as purposeful catalysts for change." This exemplary program offers a model with practical, implementable, and assessable means for developing a program building on our Fulbright experiences in ways that advance the overall goals of the Fulbright program, thereby enhancing their impact.

As always, this issue provides a set of commentaries and articles from our global alumni on the benefits of cultural exchange programs across multiple fields including higher education, entrepreneurship, health care, and artificial intelligence. All of these articles cast clear light on the Fulbright Programs' enduring impact and how these programs provide invaluable experiences that promote mutual understanding.

Thank you for reading the *Fulbright Chronicles*. We hope that it inspires you to become more connected to other Fulbrighters in ways that advance the timeless and much-needed efforts to promote mutual understanding and create the knowledge necessary to build a more peaceful and prosperous world for all.