

Latitudes

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Did someone forward you this newsletter? [Sign up free](#) to receive your own copy.

You can now read The Chronicle on [Apple News](#), [Flipboard](#), and [Google News](#).

How to be “Fulbright friendly”

The [list](#) of colleges that had the most recipients of the prestigious Fulbright scholarship, the U.S. government’s flagship international-exchange program, has been released. Eighteen colleges were new to the list for the 2022-23 academic year. And nine doctoral institutions, three master’s, five baccalaureate, and one four-year special-focus institution were the top producers of both U.S. scholars and U.S. students.

What does it take to have high participation in the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program, which offers teaching and research grants for college faculty and administrators? A common thread among top-producing colleges is that they have “Fulbright friendly” policies that help faculty and staff members apply for the program and that support them while they are abroad, said Julie E. Taylor, director of academic relations for Fulbright at the Institute of International Education, the not-for-profit organization that carries out the

U.S. Student and U.S. Scholar Programs, which are administered by the U.S. Department of State.

It's also important that institutions make sure those policies are clear and easily accessible so that applicants have comprehensive information, including guidance about how time away could affect tenure and promotion, Taylor said.

I spoke with people at three colleges that are either top producers of Fulbright scholars, or that have made more faculty participation an institutional priority, about what it takes to be Fulbright friendly. Here's what they told me:

Appalachian State University, in western North Carolina, includes global engagement in its campus mission, so perhaps it is no surprise that it's a top producer among master's institutions of both Fulbright scholars and students.

The college provides significant assistance to faculty and staff members applying for Fulbrights. During Fulbright Week, it offers a slate of workshops for prospective applicants, developing new programming based on feedback from the previous year. This year's line-up, for example, includes a talk by a Fulbright alumnus who went to Austria with his wife and four children because many professors had asked about the feasibility of going abroad with a family, said Chrissie Faupel, executive director for international education and development.

Applicants can get feedback on early drafts of their application. For those who want it, three former Fulbright recipients act as volunteer reviewers, giving advice to strengthen proposals. More than half of applicants who go through the review process have successfully won awards, Faupel said.

Former scholars are important ambassadors for the program, sharing the impact of their time abroad on their scholarship and teaching in both formal and informal settings, Faupel said. “For many of them, it really is a labor of love.”

Her office also provides faculty travel grants that allow professors thinking of trying for a Fulbright to spend time on the ground in the country where they have interest in teaching or doing research. Faculty members often use the grants, of up to \$1,500, to attend conferences or lead short study-abroad programs to a particular destination, helping them build experience and contacts locally. “It gets their feet wet,” Faupel said.

Next on her agenda: to develop more programming to encourage college administrators to apply for Fulbright awards.

Sending a signal and making everyone whole

Administrators at **Purdue University** wanted to send a message about the value they place on the Fulbright scholars award. So they created the role of provost’s fellow for Fulbright faculty awards in 2017.

“The position sends a strong signal to the entire campus about the importance of the award to Purdue,” said Christopher J. Lukasik, an associate professor of English and American studies who is the first, and so far only, provost’s fellow.

Lukasik, a Fulbright alumnus, acts as a dedicated resource for faculty members interested in applying for the program. He helps recruit prospective participants, assists individual professors with their applications, and troubleshoots issues that arise.

In his role, he has also identified systemic hurdles that kept faculty members from applying for the grants. For example, for some professors, the award amount was less than their regular salary, so winning a Fulbright effectively meant taking a pay cut while abroad. Purdue instituted a “salary top-off” policy, making up the difference between the award amount and a professor’s full salary.

Lukasik works on a strategic level in other ways, consulting with administrators across campus about how increasing Fulbright participation can fit into their broader goals. Fulbrights are often the first step toward larger international partnerships such as study-abroad programs, faculty exchanges, and research collaborations, Lukasik said. And departments that send faculty members on Fulbrights typically see an increase in graduate applications from the host country.

Having an institutional commitment to the Fulbright program makes sense because it’s the only prestigious grant program open to almost every faculty member on campus, bringing international visibility and recognition to their research or teaching. “Fulbright awards can enhance the professional and personal development of our faculty,” Lukasik said, “whether you are an engineering or an English professor.”

Recent graduates and graduate students at the **University of Florida** frequently earn Fulbright student awards, but the institution wasn’t as successful on the scholars side.

When David L. Reed and his colleagues dug into the data, they found real variation between academic departments. Some departments had higher rates of participation, said Reed, Florida’s associate provost for strategic initiatives. But others discouraged professors from applying, seeing it as a burden for the department to have to cover recipients’ teaching assignments.

“They saw it as harmful for the department,” Reed said, “rather than incredible professional development for faculty.”

Florida leaders realized they needed a consistent institutional policy, so Reed convened a yearlong series of universitywide conversations to identify roadblocks to participation and find solutions. One problem identified in the discussions, during the 2018-19 academic year, was that because the Fulbright award goes to individual faculty members, the university and academic departments would sometimes not know that a professor had applied until they won the grant.

That left department chairs scrambling at the last minute to cover the recipient’s courseload and other duties. Florida began requiring professors to submit their applications through the university’s international center, giving “lots of heads up” for planning, Reed said.

Departments, through their academic college, can also apply to the provost’s office for additional funds to help offset replacement teaching costs.

The process identified disincentives on the faculty side, too. Covering expenses while abroad could be difficult, especially for those with families. A policy developed by Florida ensures that faculty members receive their full salary while overseas, in addition to the Fulbright award, and that they keep their benefits. Recipients can then use their Fulbright funds for research and other activities, Reed said.

Applications for the 2024-25 Fulbright U.S. Scholar program open this month, and there is an online informational session this afternoon, Wednesday, February 15, at 2 p.m. ET. You can [register here](#), or check out the [schedule of future webinars](#). More details about the awards are also on the [Fulbright scholar website](#).