

J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board
Minutes of the 257th Quarterly Meeting
Washington, DC
November 14, 2012

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The 257th meeting of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board took place in Washington, DC on November 14, 2012 at the Department of State Annex Building, SA-5.

Members in attendance at the quarterly Board meeting were: Chairman Tom Healy, Vice Chair Susan Ness and Members, Rye Barcott, Betty Castor, Gabriel Guerra-Mondragón, and Christie Gilson. Participating via phone was: Member Mark Alexander. Excused were Members: Shelby Lewis, Lisa Caputo, and Anita McBride

Wednesday November 14, 2012

Call to Order

Chairman, Tom Healy

Chairman Tom Healy called the Board meeting to order at 9am and the Board proceeded in closed session for several policy and program discussions.

Regional Branch Report to the Board & Board Reader Report:

SCA – South and Central Asia

Branch Chief, Sue Borja

Chairman, Tom Healy

Chairman Healy asked all visitors in the room to introduce themselves, which included many of the Office of Academic Exchange Program Branch Chiefs. He thanked them all for their work on the program. Chairman Healy noted that the SCA presentation was intended to be a model for other branch presentations to the Board, cycling through all branches over the next year. Vice Chair Ness added that this would also hopefully increase communication between the Board and posts, commissions, and commission executive directors.

Branch Chief Sue Borja began with a Power Point presentation to the Board which described the program components, budgets and trends in the SCA region. Ms. Borja started by discussing the general political and financial environment in SCA. She discussed which countries had post-run programs and which were run by a commission, as well as the overall funding and participant numbers for the region. In response to a question posed by Chairman Healy, Ms. Borja noted that the Indian government contributed half the program costs to the Fulbright Program in India; the Board engaged in a discussion of cost sharing in the program.

Ms. Borja then discussed each grant category available in SCA, as well as some specific enrichment programs available for the SCA grantees. She then continued with a description of the Afghanistan program, which is only for visiting students, as Americans do not currently travel to Afghanistan under the program. In response to Board questions, Ms.

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Borja discussed recruitment strategies and challenges in reaching Afghan women and those outside of Kabul. The discussion continued about the fields Fulbrighters study in the U.S. and about the return rate of Afghan grantees back to Afghanistan. This led to a general discussion about return rates throughout the region. At the Board's questioning Ms. Borja discussed the U.S. programs in Afghanistan and Pakistan, noting that the Afghanistan program was suspended in 1979 and the Pakistan program resumed, for scholars only, in 2008.

Ms. Borja discussed the Sri Lanka Professional Scholar Program and the Board asked Lisa Helling to research if there were similar non-academic programs in other regions. Ms. Borja discussed the enrichment workshops across the region. Ms. Borja and the Board had an extended discussion about the English Teaching Assistant (ETA) program in the region, including the countries eligible for the program – the ETA program began in the region in 2009 and is slowly expanding in number of grantees and participating countries. Chairman Healy requested more information about how the decision is made regarding ETAs vs. research students globally. There was some discussion about the Peace Corps English teaching program and where those programs are vs. where the ETAs are placed to ensure non-duplication of resources. Chairman Healy discussed the remote environment for many of the ETA placements, and joined Ms. Borja in a discussion of the placement decisions.

The Board also questioned what the Board's storytelling project could add to the effort to collate best practices regarding the ETA program and noted that Indonesia keeps one ETA for a second year to mentor the incoming ETAs. The Board asked whether a longer time in country would be beneficial and discussed with Ms. Borja that question in relation to the effort to give more people the opportunity to travel for a year. Member Christie Gilson also noted the need for time to return to the U.S. and recharge. Ms. Borja discussed the break, training and encouragement provided by the midyear ETA workshop.

Ms. Borja discussed the India program in depth, noting that the program has tripled since 2008. The Board and Ms. Borja discussed recruitment challenges for the scholar program, specifically in India.

Ms. Borja discussed the strength of increasing diversity across the region and new opportunities such as for the ETA program in Turkmenistan. There was a discussion of disability recruitment in the region and Ms. Borja specifically highlighted the strides made by the Nepal program in that area. Dr. Gilson noted that specifically in regions with war-torn countries that recruiting disabled persons is very important and should be encouraged.

A challenge for the program in SCA is managing growth – tripling in India, doubling in Afghanistan and maintaining a very large program in Pakistan. Additionally, Ms. Borja noted that beyond security challenges in the region, there are a high percentage of natural disasters that happen there and overall challenging environments.

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Chairman Healy asked what the Board could do to help in the region and Ms. Borja responded that really the most helpful would be to increase awareness and help recruitment of U.S. scholars for the region, noting that SCA is an often overlooked region for academics. Chairman Healy also encouraged all branches to assess whether a regional program like NEXUS would be appropriate for their region as a way to increase interest in the scholar program.

Academic Programs Report & Discussion

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs Meghann Curtis

Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) Meghann Curtis began by noting that the Board had expressed interest in hearing about the NEXUS program and the Fulbright Public Policy Fellows (FPPF). She discussed the NEXUS program kickoff in Banff and the lead scholar's achievements. DAS Curtis noted the model that this program serves in the scholar program. Chairman Healy noted that the Board would like to focus on the NEXUS program during its May meeting. DAS Curtis noted the accomplishments from the previous group of NEXUS grantees and how pleased the program office is with the implementation of some of the projects.

DAS Curtis then discussed the FPPF program, which is in its first year. She noted that no one could be sent to Tunisia because of security concerns, but two of those fellows were placed in Cote d'Ivoire and one in the Dominican Republic. The program office is hearing great feedback on the program and has overcome many of the initial challenges typical in the first year of operation. DAS Curtis discussed expansion of the FPPF program for next year including to Burma, Ethiopia and Malawi. The Board discussed with DAS Curtis how new countries are selected and the capacity for hosting FPPFs and about the return element of this "exchange", which is the non-Fulbright program Study of the U.S. Institutes.

DAS Curtis and the Board discussed specific challenges relating to the US program in Burma and specific challenges related to recruiting scholars for Burma. DAS Curtis and the Board also discussed the FY2012 and FY2013 budgets.

Academic Exchange Programs Report & Discussion

Office Director, Office of Academic Exchange Programs, Mary Kirk

Mary Kirk noted that this was her first Board Meeting officially on board as Office Director. She said that she knows the Board would like to discuss the transmittal memo for application review but that first she wanted to discuss the student program. The U.S. student program application period closed in October and all applications were being screened and reviewed now. For the first time in 10 years there has been a dip in application numbers of about 3% but the competition is still strong with about 9,500 applications for about 1,800 grants. Ms. Kirk noted that the ETA opportunities have attracted a growing number of applications and that there has been a decrease in PhD applicants. MA applicants are holding steady and there was a slight dip in the research

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category for graduating seniors. Diversity is an important objective and there has been an increase of over 6% in applications from African-American candidates.

Ms. Kirk and the Board discussed how it would be best to present worldwide statistics and trends to the Board and determined it would be done globally on a yearly basis but the format was yet to be worked out. Ms. Kirk noted the urgency of application reviews by the Board and requested the Board stick to its 2-week turnaround time on reviewing applications. Chairman Healy requested that Lisa Helling reach out to Board members during their first few batches of review and make sure everything is going okay.

Ms. Kirk discussed the upcoming enrichment seminars and a meeting of the European EDs in Washington, which the Board should plan to attend.

Fulbright-Hays Program Report & Discussion
Office Director, KimOanh Nguyen-Lam

Office Director KimOanh Nguyen-Lam introduced the Department of Education-administered Fulbright-Hays programs and discussed each program and its features. Dr. Nguyen-Lam confirmed in response to a question from the Board that there are no award categories for Western Europe at this time. There was specific discussion of the Seminars Abroad Program, which faced significant budget cuts this year. In response to Board questions there was an in-depth discussion of this program in China.

Dr. Nguyen-Lam noted that their office had four strategic goals this year and outlined those for the Board. First, is to respond to President Obama's goal to support having the most competitive workforce in the world by providing funding to U.S. universities and colleges to prepare students for the 21st Century. Second, is to increase diversity by working with HBCUs, tribal colleges and universities and Hispanic and Latino universities to not only increase applications but to enhance the quality of their applications. Third, is the goal of increasing national security and global competitiveness by focusing on world regions, languages and countries that are of critical need and importance for the U.S. Finally, the last goal is to prioritize evaluation and assessment of their programs.

Beyond evaluation, a research focus for the staff is to look at the impact of learning outcomes, such as a recent study noting a correlation between students who return from study abroad and graduation rates. The Board asked Lisa Helling to distribute a summary of this study after the Board meeting. The Board discussed a need to review the policies relating to the Department of Education programs at a future meeting.

Adjournment
Chairman, Tom Healy

The Board resumed in closed session until adjournment at 3:30pm.