Fulbright US Scholar Program: Frequently Asked Questions

The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961 celebrates its 75th anniversary in 2021. Since its inception, some 400,000 people have participated in Fulbright programs. Each year, in collaboration with binational Fulbright commissions worldwide, various projects under the auspices of the Fulbright Program offer awards to approximately 1,600 US students, 1,200 US Scholars, 4,000 international students, 900 visiting scholars, and hundreds more professionals and teachers.

Michigan State University (MSU) boasts a strong showing in Fulbright Scholar numbers, with over 400 Scholars named since 1950. In the last ten years, 63 MSU faculty have participated in the US Scholar Program in over 40 different countries, from Albania and Zambia. Their dozens of fields of study have included Agriculture, Gender Studies, Public Health, Sociology, Journalism, Political Science, and more.

What is the Fulbright Scholar Program?

- The Fulbright Scholar Program offers American faculty members and administrators hundreds of fellowships distributed across 400 teaching, research, and other opportunities in over 135 countries annually.
- The program is administered by the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) on behalf of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State.

Who can apply for the Fulbright Scholar Program?

- Applicants must hold US citizenship at the time of application; permanent residence is not sufficient.
- Current faculty, administrators, and experienced professionals are encouraged to apply. Postdoctoral candidates are encouraged to apply for postdoctoral awards. Graduate or doctoral students seeking funding to complete their degrees are ineligible.
- Recipients of a Fulbright Scholar award are eligible to apply for another award two years after the date of completion of the previous award.

When does the competition open?

- The competition opens each year in early February and closes in mid-September, except for some International Education Administrator (IEA) awards.
- Applications are submitted for opportunities in the following academic year, so the application deadline in September 2021 is for awards during the 2022-23 academic year.

What are the financial benefits of Fulbright awards?

- Benefits vary by country and type of award. Fulbright awards are typically budgeted to cover travel and living costs in-country for the grantee and their accompanying dependents.

How long is the Fulbright Scholar award period?

- Awards vary in length from two months to twelve months.
- Flex options are available for some awards, allowing the recipient to divide the award into multiple, short-term stays in the host country over a period of one to two years.
What MSU policies impact Fulbright Scholar awards?

- Fulbright grants are considered “prestigious awards” by MSU and full-time tenure system faculty members may apply for a continuation of benefits (e.g., health care coverage, dental plan) during a leave of absence without pay (MSU Faculty Handbook, p. 149).\(^1\) Such a request must be initiated by the faculty member and requires the endorsement of the chairperson/director and dean, as well as the coordination of continued benefits between the Office of the Provost and the Benefits office.
- “Individuals holding either full-time appointments in other academic personnel continuing appointment systems... or full-time regular, university support staff appointments also are eligible to request coverage under this policy if they are recipients of [similar] awards” (MSU Faculty Handbook, p. 150).
- This leave of absence policy is the only information available from MSU Human Resources regarding benefits as related to prestigious awards; other questions are handled on a case-by-case basis.

How might a Fulbright Scholar award affect my MSU tenure and promotion?

- “An extension of the probationary appointment may be requested from the University Committee on Faculty Tenure ... to receive prestigious awards [...].”\(^2\)

How would a Fulbright Scholar award impact my MSU salary?

- There is currently no centralized guidance for offsetting any salary loss due to a Fulbright award if the award stipend amount falls below a faculty member’s academic year base salary. Departments and Colleges may have internal policies for “top-off” salary.

Whom should I work with on my Fulbright Scholar application?

- Prospective applicants should contact MSU’s Fulbright Scholar Liaison, Joy Campbell (contact information in footer), to indicate interest in the program.
- Faculty typically work with their chairs and directors for questions on teaching schedules, sabbatical timing, continuation of benefits, and other details that will impact the academic unit.
- Returned Fulbright Scholars across campus, including members of the Fulbright Advisory Committee, may have valuable insights. Explore the Scholar Directory for faculty from MSU who have received Fulbrights, as well as peers from other institutions who have worked in a specific country or field who could be good resources.
- While Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is not required at the time of application, any non-exempt project will require IRB approval prior to the beginning of the award.
- As the Fulbright Scholar award is considered an award and not a grant, applicants are not required to coordinate with the Office of Sponsored Projects.

More information, including detailed programmatic FAQs, individual award descriptions, and an extended timeline can be found on the official Fulbright Scholar website at: https://cies.org/us-scholar-awards.

Further details about the Fulbright programs at MSU can be found here: http://isp.msu.edu/fulbright.

\(^1\) https://hr.msu.edu/_resources/pdf/faculty-handbook/fac_policy_man.pdf
\(^2\) https://hr.msu.edu/ua/promotion/faculty-academic-staff/guide.html#Extending