Fulbright Impact

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Five reflections from Greek and American Teachers on the impact of Fulbright experiences on their professional and personal lives are included below along with more information about the Fulbright programs available to Greek and American teachers:

Personally I have found that my travels and experiences in Greece during the summer of 2008 have an almost daily impact on my life. In informal discussions with friends, colleagues and acquaintances I seem to always mention some of the more transformative aspects of my travels. While I do talk about the beauty of the country, the wonderful Greek people and the cultural similarities and differences between our nations, I seem to consistently go back to my exposure to the archaeological wonders and art treasures of Greece.
In my classes at Carroll College there are frequent references to some aspect of Greek history especially as it pertains to the visual arts. I have presented several slide lectures that focus on the cultures and arts of both Greece and Bulgaria. They have been shown in painting, drawing and history classes. I have also presented lectures that focus specifically on the ceramics of both countries in my ceramic classes.

Since my return from the Fulbright Hays experience in Greece, I have also been involved in several outreach and artistic projects.

From my Greek experience I am researching a project about Classic Red and Black vases and beginning to produce artwork based on that research. I am including some images of both finished and in progress pieces.

As outreach I have shared educational materials with several area schools.
including Helena High School, Clancy Elementary School, and Carroll College Professors. I have worked with some of the Helena High School teachers to secure funding to obtain more materials from Greece for use here. That effort was successful resulting in Helena High School purchasing ten Twelve Olympian Gods museum kits through a grant from the Helena Education Foundation. I have also disseminated information to the local schools about travel and cultural immersion opportunities available to faculty and administrators through the Fulbright Foundation and other agencies.

At the request of Greek educators I solicited, received, and donated English Language teaching materials from an American company and sent them to The American Farm School of Thessaloniki in Greece.

Most recently I have presented a Faculty Colloquium at Carroll College about my Fulbright last November. There are more slide talks planned for the future including a talk that will be free and open to the general public in the area within the next two months.

Finally as I complete more artwork that is successful I will have at least one exhibit on campus to display the fruits of my Fulbright experiences and research.


“Are you that guy that went on that Fulbright trip to Europe a while back?” Even after almost two years, I’m still answering that question. When I returned, I wanted to share all the great stories of the trip with anyone who would listen. So I started lining up events. I taught lessons to English classes, did a talk for the public library, and presented a PowerPoint for the local Lions Club. Time passed, and I figured that friends and colleagues had
forgotten about the trip. Then I had requests to talk about the art I had seen in Greece and Bulgaria and the landmarks mentioned in Greece mythology. A presentation for the local Lions Club was followed by more visits to classrooms. Last fall, Dr. Amy Anderson and I presented at a poster session at the Fulbright Alumni Conference in Washington. Last winter, I presented at a regional library conference, and this spring I’m repeating my lesson on Greek mythology and giving an overview of the program to a local Rotary Club. I even presented a slide show for friends who were planning a trip to Greece. Just whenever I think I probably won’t be talking about the Fulbright program again, someone else asks me about it.

“Yes, I’m the guy who went to Greece and Bulgaria on a Fulbright.” I had planned to share the cultural experiences we gained on the Fulbright with students in my own rural district and with others outside the school. I think I’ve done that, but it’s not over yet. If past experience is any guide, I’ll probably be answering questions about the Fulbright Program for many years to come.

Evangelia Mylona, Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI), 2009

How can words express the feeling of becoming culturally wealthy? As a S.U.S.I. participant, I felt immensely privileged to be part of this fascinating program called Study of the United States Institute. Representing my country in an international meeting was a great honor and a valuable experience,
which provided me with knowledge not only about the USA, but also about 25 more countries (the other participants’ home countries).

We all exchanged experiences, ideas, tips and advice about teaching, expanding thus our views and enriching our teaching techniques. Thanks to the seminar, we gained a deeper and better understanding of socio-political, economic and cultural issues that triggered debates and discussions after which we realised that our general understanding of the world and our tolerance to others had been enriched. Open-mindedness and tolerance were two major values enhanced during the program’s seminar, which were essentially practiced by the participants during their 6-week co-existence. By the end of the program we were ready as educators to use all the newfound wisdom and knowledge in E.S.L. teaching. Not only was I be able to incorporate bits and pieces of the American culture in the classroom to make my lesson more appealing to the students, (which was very useful since students find American pop culture interesting and familiar because of music and cinema), but also, I was more capable of dealing with the rather demanding situation of teaching a class with children from other cultures. What I tried to do after the program is share my experience with my students
providing them with information about various cultures of the planet because I reckon that learning English is a way to learn about the world, geography, culture and therefore a way to embrace diversity, motivate dialogue, debate differences, leave fear for the unknown or the different behind, create the need and interest to travel and learn. By attending such a program, my multi-cultural approach to teaching became more accurate. Moreover, the rich material offered by the S.U.S.I. organisers (books, magazines, handouts, video tapes) added to our further cultivation and became a useful tool in ELT classroom.

On a personal level, I gained lots of close new friends all around the world, with whom I will keep in touch in order to keep exchanging and sharing teaching experiences and problems, too. Using all my senses, I saw new landscapes, tried new tastes and heard new sounds, which I am going to treasure in my memory forever.

All in all, the program introduced me to new places, initiated new friendships and exposed me to an English-speaking environment that proved to be valuable for me as an English teacher.
Athanasios Pyretzidis, EFL Instructor, Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI), 2008

Being a 2008 alumnus of the Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSI), I am pleased to report that my active participation in this U.S. State Department exchange program for Secondary Educators has benefited me enormously in a variety of ways, bearing a lasting impression on both my personal character and professional expertise as well as bringing me into contact with the Fulbright Foundation in Greece.

To start with, I was exposed and involved with a unique syllabus examining a resourceful and multi-faceted view of U.S. history, politics, literature and art, film, law, music, and other representations of American society. A balanced program of theoretical sessions, on-site visits and meetings with American scholars have helped me and other course participants explore issues relevant to our professional interests and conduct independent research. They also formed a multilaterally beneficial locus for a wide array of thought-provoking concepts which we addressed, in and out of class, such as problems and phenomena of cultural diversity in a globalized world, freedom of speech with regard to hatred and profanity, slavery and race, religious freedom, nature and the environment, immigration policies - just to name a few. I have been fortunate enough to meet fascinating and open-minded colleagues originating from a plethora of nations and teaching backgrounds all over the world who wished, like me, to enhance their knowledge about the United States and experience the prevailing culture at its best, studying and living at Amherst College campus.

We were all given and studied the major documents that founded American history and politics, and rendered the U.S. such a visionary country. I really cherished panel discussions led by field specialists who constantly challenged our thoughts, and accepted to be challenged by us. This has all proved to be a refreshing revelation for me to implement in the daily teaching routine; so far, however, I have only been using excerpts from authentic materials to initiate invigorating class debates with my pupils. I dare say I am trying to raise greater global awareness, provide better understanding of the American nature and consequently trigger much more interest in U.S. art, geography,
politics and policies so as to cope effectively with preconceived ideas and misconceptions the students may have with regard to the United States. Unfortunately, the Greek Data Privacy Act and Children’s Ombudsman strictly forbid taking and/or publishing photographs and revealing pupil identities taking part in any school activities without prior authorisation from all parties concerned.

May I also add that the Program participants have also been a source for constructive dialogue, inspiration and comparison of our societies and educational challenges. In addition, I have already joined the STATE ALUMNI web-based community for all U.S. Government exchange programs’ alumni and my 2008 Class have also set up ten photo albums at http://picasaweb.google.com/itd2008group in order to exchange photo mementos of our study visit in the States. Needless to say, Greek colleagues at school have also shared the benefits of my academic experience and the bibliographical references I have brought over from the States; I was equally eager to engage in informative staff discussions.

Everything I have learned and witnessed within the six-week summer institute has intrigued my perception of what America truly is and stands for: a huge territorial expanse and a multiethnic land of opportunities promoting freedom of the individual expression.


My Fulbright program, participation in the 2006 summer session of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, was the most significant milestone of my academic career and personal development. It formed the basis for my current graduate work, a master's degree in Ancient Greek with a special focus on the performance of Athenian tragedy. I gained numerous friends and professional contacts in the fields of Classics, Archaeology, Education, and beyond. Most of all, I achieved more during that summer than I could have
ever predicted. In only six weeks, the sheer amount of reading, lectures, museum visits, site reports and miles travelled amounted to a lifetime of memories.

On a daily basis my students hear stories of my travels throughout Attika, the Peloponnesus, the island of Crete, and countless other places. Cities of mythological fame are now real geographical locations for the students in my ancient Greek classes: Mycenae, Sparta, Athens, Delphi, Thebes, Knossos, Olympia, and Corinth leap out of our textbooks. For me, the real joy in teaching Greek comes from the knowledge that I can bring my personal experiences into what would otherwise be a story on a page, told from another’s point of view. Because of my Fulbright, the students know about the ancient Olympics, the Labyrinth, and Apollo’s Oracle from my first-hand experience. That cultural knowledge, both ancient and modern, is contained within the stories that I preserved from my summer adventures – even tales of lunch and dinner have tidbits about Greece that my students can learn. Of course, they laugh when hearing my story of ordering “bread” in a bakery in Athens.

Since the day I came home from my Fulbright experience, I have been trying to return. Last February I had the good fortune to take a group of my students to Greece for one week.
We visited museums and archaeological sites, including the Agora, Akropolis, the site of Delphi, and even a quick stop at the Mycenaean citadel of Gla (my site report during the ASCSA summer session). My students were blessed with a number of guest speakers including Nicholas Tourides from the Fulbright Foundation in Greece, Maria Georgopoulou at the Gennadion Library at ASCSA, and Molly Richardson at the Epigraphical Museum in Athens. For most, the highlight of our trip was a visit to a Greek school, where I reconnected with a Greek teacher, Poppy Georgakellou. She was only too happy to show us around her school, and we were very excited to meet Greek students and to learn how the educational system worked. We were also honored to sit in a classroom and observe as a Greek class was taught, witnessing similarities and differences between a Greek classroom and our traditional American setting.
I am forever indebted to the Fulbright Foundation in Greece for making this experience possible. Every day I answer my students’ questions using the knowledge I gained during my time in Greece. These unique lessons, which can only be learned through personal experience, will be with me always. They are, as Thucydides writes, a possession for all time.

THE FULBRIGHT FOUNDATION IN GREECE A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The Fulbright Program is the premier international educational exchange program in the world. It was established in the United States in 1946 by Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas.

The Fulbright Program awards approximately 6,000 grants annually to scholars from the U.S. and 155 other countries.

Fulbright alumni include Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, prime ministers and heads of state, professors and scientists, ambassadors and artists, Supreme Court justices and company presidents.

The Fulbright Foundation in Greece was established in 1948 and is the oldest Fulbright Program in Europe and the second oldest continuously operating program in the world. Bi-nationalism is central to the Fulbright Foundation.
Since 1948, the Fulbright Foundation has offered free advising services for studies in the U.S. to thousands of individuals and has awarded Fulbright grants to more than 4,700 Greeks and Americans.

FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS
Fulbright grants are in the form of financial stipends that allow students, scholars, artists, and teachers to study, lecture, or conduct independent research. Grantees are selected on the basis of academic and professional excellence, character, and career and leadership potential. National review committees appointed by the Fulbright Foundation in Greece and the Foundation’s Board of Directors select the scholars. Fulbright grants are awarded in the Arts and Humanities, Business and Finance, Science, Technology, and the Environment, Education, Media and Government. The full range of grant opportunities available to both Greeks and Americans can be found at: www.fulbright.gr

TEACHER EXCHANGE PROGRAMS BETWEEN GREECE AND THE U.S.A.

STUDY OF THE U.S. INSTITUTES (FOR GREEK CITIZENS)
For secondary school educators involved in the teaching of English and professionals in curriculum development, teacher training and textbook writing. Study of the United States Institutes is a six-week academic training program and its purpose is to improve the quality of teaching and enhance the development of curricula in educational institutions and school systems outside the United States. Institute programs are held at university campuses throughout the U.S. and focus on a particular theme or topic in American studies.

GREECE CLASSICS SEMINAR (FOR U.S. CITIZENS)
For American high school teachers and college professors of Social Studies, Language, and History. The Greece Classics seminar, a six-week intensive introduction to Greece from antiquity through the modern period, is organized and offered by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA), and supported by the Fulbright Foundation in Greece and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State. The
program is administered by the American Councils for International Education. Applications must be filed to both the ASCSA and the American Councils for International Education.

FULBRIGHT-HAYS SEMINAR FOR AMERICAN EDUCATORS (2008)
In 2008, Greece was selected along with Bulgaria to organize a Fulbright-Hays seminar for American educators. The seminar offered a unique experience of professional and personal enrichment, leading to a better understanding of Greece’s history, culture and people and acts as a forum for the development of new international educational projects and collaborations. The objective of the seminar, which took place in Greece from June 1-19, 2008, was to provide an overview of Greece and Greek history and culture, past and present. Participants were introduced to the country’s history and culture and experienced contemporary life through visits to archaeological sites, schools, nature reserves, museums and cultural centers. Visits were combined with lectures by professional staffs, which were tied in with the educational, political, cultural and historical significance of the places visited. In the questionnaires they filled out before departing Greece for Bulgaria, the 16 educators who participated in the program expressed their appreciation of the entire experience.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR SECONDARY EDUCATORS (2010) (FOR GREEK CITIZENS)
The Greek Teacher Professional Development Program is an eight-week program for Greek teachers of the Humanities who are citizens of Greece and have been in service teaching from 3 to 5 years. The Program encompasses an academic program, field experience in diverse secondary schools, and cultural exchanges and trips. It culminates in the development of a portfolio and cultural digital stories. The program is supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State, hosted by George Mason University (GMU), in partnership with Fairfax County Public Schools, and administered by the Fulbright Foundation in Greece.

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