

# Fulbright US Scholar Program at Michigan State University

## Frequently Asked Questions



The Fulbright-Hays Act of 1946 will celebrate its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026. 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, 800 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 nearly 500 Scholars named since the program's inception in 1946.** In the last ten years, 69 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, Sociology, Linguistics, Public Health, Engineering, Photography, Journalism, Political Science, and more. **In February 2024, we were named a [Top Producing institution of Fulbright Scholars](#) for the tenth consecutive year, a record unmatched by any research institution in the same time period.**

### General Fulbright Scholar Program Questions

*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 Institute of International Education (IIE) on behalf of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the **US Department of State**. IIE also administers the Fulbright US Student Program.

*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, a subset of US Scholar awards.
- Graduate or doctoral students seeking funding to complete their degrees are ineligible, but are encouraged to look into the [Fulbright US Student Program](#) and [Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad](#) grants.
- Recipients of a prior 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 February and closes in mid-September**, except for some International Education Administrator (IEA) awards.
- Applications are submitted for **opportunities in the following academic year**; for example, the application deadline in September 2024 is for awards during the 2025-26 academic year.

*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 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, in some cases, their accompanying dependents.

*What are other benefits of Fulbright awards?*

- Some of the **other benefits** of being a Fulbright awardee include making professional connections, learning about the host country and its people, promoting collaboration between MSU and the host institution, integrating into a new community, increased networking through Fulbright alumni groups, increased likelihood of international publications, and more.
- In a recent impact statement<sup>1</sup>, it was reported that:
  - 97% of Visiting and US Scholars found Fulbright was **professionally transformative**
  - 95% of Visiting and US Scholars **widened their research networks**
  - 85% of Visiting and US Scholars **adapted their research methods or teaching approach** as a result of their Fulbright
  - 73% of Visiting and US Scholars took on **new internationalization efforts** after Fulbright.

## MSU-Specific Questions: Pre-Award

*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).<sup>2</sup> Such a request must be initiated by the faculty member and requires the

<sup>1</sup> <https://fulbrightscholars.org/our-impact/facts-about-fulbright-scholar-program>

<sup>2</sup> [https://hr.msu.edu/\\_resources/pdf/faculty-handbook/fac\\_policy\\_man.pdf](https://hr.msu.edu/_resources/pdf/faculty-handbook/fac_policy_man.pdf)

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 [...].”<sup>3</sup>

*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/Program Advisor**, Joy Campbell (contact information in footer), to indicate interest in the program. Completing this [Fulbright Program Interest Survey](#) will add you to the Scholar Liaison’s list of interested faculty, so you receive information about upcoming sessions and deadlines.
- Faculty typically work with their **chairs and directors** for questions on teaching schedules, sabbatical or leave timing, financial arrangements, continuation of benefits, committee works, and other details that will impact the academic unit.
- Unit liaisons in the [Office of Faculty and Academic Staff Affairs](#) can provide guidance to faculty members and their departments as needed on questions pertaining to leave and salary.
- 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**.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://hr.msu.edu/ua/promotion/faculty-academic-staff/guide.html#extending>

## MSU-Specific Questions: During and After Award

*What support is available to MSU Fulbright Scholars during their overseas grant period?*

- As with all MSU travelers, support is available through the [Office for Global Health, Safety and Security](#). This office provides information on international health insurance and resources, security advice, and connections with International SOS, the entity handling emergency assistance related to health, safety, security, lost documents, or need for legal assistance.

*How does MSU support and celebrate Fulbright Scholars upon their return to campus?*

- Opportunities for in-person celebrations were limited during the pandemic. In more recent years, **Fulbrighters from all programs have been invited to a fall reception** to mingle and meet past, former, and aspiring Fulbrighters at MSU. International Studies and Programs hopes to increase visibility of our returning Scholars through press releases, Fulbright gatherings, and other opportunities to share about their recent Fulbright projects.
- In addition, each September **ISP seeks returned Fulbright Scholars to engage in the service of reading Fulbright Student Program applications and providing feedback for MSU students applicants**. Input from successful Fulbright Scholars is instrumental in helping students put the finishing touches on their applications to boost their competitiveness.
- Returned Scholars are encouraged to **get involved with the [West and Mid-Michigan chapter of the Fulbright Association](#)**, which organizes events such as film nights, museum visits, dinners, and more for Fulbrighters to gather.

## Where Can I Learn More?

- More information, including detailed programmatic FAQs, individual award descriptions, upcoming and recorded information sessions, virtual office hours, and an extended timeline can be found on the official Fulbright Scholar website at: <https://fulbrightscholars.org>.
- Further details about the Fulbright programs at MSU can be found here: <http://isp.msu.edu/fulbright>.