

11th Fulbright International Summer Institute

August 13-24, RIU Pravets Resort

The eleventh Fulbright International Summer Institute (FISI) took place at the RIU Pravets Resort on August 13-24, 2012. The event attracted 113 students from the US, Bulgaria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Russia, Serbia, Kazakhstan and Greece. Their backgrounds ranged from political science, law, economics, international relations, history and business administration to information technology, philosophy, biopsychology, anthropology, linguistics, eco-chemistry, sociology, and music.

FISI 2012 was organized by the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission but its ultimate success heavily depended on the financial support, cooperation and synergy of *America for Bulgaria* Foundation and other institutions such as Sofia University and its Centre of Excellence *Dialogue Europe*, the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and Monmouth College in Illinois, USA. Among the participants were 27 MBA students from the Ross School of Business led by Professor George Siedel. They attended his course on *Negotiation and Conflict Resolution* and were offered a special program that involved meetings with prominent Bulgarian entrepreneurs and visits to business companies. Professor Brenda Tooley from Monmouth College and Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi from the University of Peshawar, Pakistan, also brought students from their home institutions. Doctoral and postdoctoral students from the Centre of Excellence at Sofia University attended special team-taught courses and participated in a research forum.

FISI offered a total of 14 interdisciplinary courses conducted by 24 distinguished professors from prestigious universities and institu-



Official FISI Opening

From right to left: Dr. Julia Stefanova, FISI Director; Petya Evtimova, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Youth and Science; Ivanka Tzankova, Program Director, America for Bulgaria Foundation

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FISI participants



FISI class



FISI class



FISI class



Round table discussion



FISI students



FISI students

tions such as Harvard University, University of Michigan, University of Peshawar, Sofia University, New Bulgarian University, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, University of Oklahoma, University of Veliko Turnovo, Monmouth College, South-West University in Blagoevgrad, the American University in Bulgaria, the New York District Court, and Foresight Alliance.

Along with the FISI courses, the new group of American Fulbright lecturers, graduate students and English Teaching Assistants were offered cultural orientation, professional training and an intensive two-week course in Bulgarian language. The *Bulgarian Culture* course introduced participants to Bulgaria's long and rich history, music, art, education, tourism, media as well as the current political and economic situation.



Orientation for US Grantees at FISI 2012 Richard Damstra, CAO and Board member, talking to the new group of US Fulbright grantees



Welcome dinner with the participation of James Warlick, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Bulgaria

Trip to Saeva Dupka Cave

A visit to the *Saeva Dupka Cave* and lunch in the scenic Ribaritsa resort village offered FISI students and lecturers a glimpse of the beauty of Bulgarian nature and a taste of the traditional Bulgarian cuisine, while classical music lovers had the chance to enjoy the opera *The Marriage of Figaro* and the ballet *Don Giovanni* on the lake stage at RIU Pravets Resort as part of the eighth edition of the annual Mozart Festival.

We would like to thank all students, lecturers and participating institutions for making FISI such a memorable experience!

Special recognition and gratitude is due to *America for Bulgaria Foundation* for its generous financial support. The contribution of the Centre of Excellence *Dialogue Europe* at Sofia University is also greatly appreciated.



Trip to Blue Ostrich Farm, village of Brestnitsa



Golf course at Pravets Golf Club



Farewell party



Farewell party



FISI Closing Awarding certificates to 2012 FISI graduates



2012 FISI participants

Fulbright Office News

DAS Meeting with Fulbright Commission Board



(From left to right) Bay Fang, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Press and Public Diplomacy for the Bureau of European Affairs, Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, Maria Metodieva, John Tennant, ED Julia Stefanova

Cultural Orientation for American Fulbright Grantees

The cultural orientation for the AY 2012-13 American Fulbright grantees was held at the Euro Cinema Hall on September 28-29, 2012 in Sofia. Participating in the orientation were: ED Julia Stefanova, PAO and Board member Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, Deborah Campbell, Consular Section Chief, and Seth Green, Regional Security Officer at the U.S. Embassy.

The two-day orientation included discussions, a Q & A session, a visit to the National History Museum, and a one-day trip to the old town of Plovdiv. Lydia Dachkova, Office Director at American Councils in Bulgaria, held a short presentation about the Kennedy Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) program.

American and Bulgarian Fulbright alumni, U.S. Embassy officials, fellows of the American Research Center in Sofia and representatives of grantees' host institutions attended the welcome reception in honor of the new U.S. Fulbrighters on September 28, 2012, at the Chrystal Palace Hotel.



The US grantees in AY 2012-13



US Embassy briefing: (from left to right) Elizabeth Fitzsimmons, Deborah Campbell, Julia Stefanova, and Seth Green



Visit to the National History Museum



One-day trip to Plovdiv

Fulbright Office News

U.S. University Presentation



Carleton College presentation at Second English Language School in Sofia

Bulgarian Fulbright Alumni Association Membership Form



Full name

Home address

Field, Academic Rank and Degree

Present Place and Address of Employment

.....

Phone, Fax

Type, Year and Duration of Grant

Place and Name of Host Institution

Please complete and return to the Fulbright Commission office address.

To Chicago and Back

For the Future of Our Children

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tsanka Dikova

Dr. Tsanka Dikova is associate professor at the Department of Dental Medicine, Medical University of Varna. Her interests are in the field of dental materials, application of lasers in dentistry, implant materials, nanomaterials and nanocoating with application in medicine. In 2010 she received the Fulbright Senior Scholar grant with her project "Nano-engineered coatings on Ti implants". From October 2011 to March, 2012, she worked with Prof. Pulickel Ajayan and his group at Rice University, Houston, TX.

It was always difficult for me, as an engineer, to express my feelings. But my travel to the USA, my life in one of the largest American cities, my work in one of the high-ranked universities of the world left deep marks in my mind. My visit there, as Fulbright scholar, helped me to enrich my knowledge in the research area I work, to find many new friends and to extend my relationship with Americans and people from different countries as well.

I have never forgotten my first meeting with an American – the apartment rent agent Brenda Scornik from Apartment Directions, Houston. It was on the second day of our stay. She was so warm and polite! When she understood it is our first time in the USA, she organized for us a small trip around the area with the most beautiful houses in Houston and Rice



Dr. Tsanka Dikova

University. She showed us not only the apartments; she was our guide in paperwork preparation. Brenda gave us very valuable advices about shopping, stores, living in the city.

The same warm reception I had from the Fulbright Association of Houston and especially from its head - Christine Tierney and Ann Webb. The Fulbrighters autumn event was organized the third day of my stay there and I received an invitation e-mail immediately after my arrival. I was very surprised they have already had information about me!? Can you imagine: I am in an unfamiliar city, the 4th largest city in the USA, 5 times and even more, larger than my city – Varna?! I have no car; I am not a good driver; I am still not familiar with the public transportation and the entire city is traced by highways... So in this situation I had to go to down-

town and to find the place of the event?! No way to do it by myself! Thankfully to Ann Webb, who came and picked me up from the hotel, I joint the event and found many new friends – foreign Fulbrighters in Houston and American Fulbrighters as well.

I would like to mention a very important thing – the Fulbrighters help each other very much. I am highly appreciative to Ann and her daughter Elizabeth, who helped us to move from



Dr. Tsanka Dikova presenting on Where is Bulgaria at Seth Johnson School

the hotel to the apartment and to buy everything we needed. They also gave us a bed... So, we had normal household since the first day in our new apartment. One more important thing - Fulbright Association of Houston organizes different events nearly every month, even twice a month: luncheon in Rice University to mark its 100 years anniversary on February, visit of famous Houston rodeo and Arts Fair in March. Joining these events gives you more opportunities to find new friends and colleagues from different countries, to exchange scientific knowledge and experience, to live the real life in the USA and to present the culture of our own country.

I managed to do the entire paperwork in and out of the Rice University only in three days after my arrival thankfully to the very good organization of the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS). Our contact started 2 months before I left Bulgaria. They sent me a full set of very useful information about visa and USA entrance documents, airport - university transfer, housing and living in Houston. On the first meeting the OISS head Dr. Adria Baker very clearly, step by step, explained to us - international visitors what we have to do for setting up our live in Houston and Rice University and how to do it. She gave us another set of documents and we thought: oh, too much paperwork again... But the letters I received were very useful for me in opening bank account and issuing Social Security Number. So, the mission of the OISS staff is to provide the best service and support possible for international visitors in Rice University in deciding their daily problems and they realize this mission the best way.

Our collaboration with OISS staff developed into very close friendship during the organization of different international events. By means of arrangement of many social programs,

including seminars, meetings, educational competition and cultural fairs, OISS aims to enhance the foreign visitors' stay in the USA. It has to be pointed out that the international students, representing 100 countries/regions, make up approximately 20% of the overall Rice population. Additionally, last year 683 foreign visitors and scholars conducted research and lecturing at Rice. The OISS staff believes that international students and scholars at Rice serve as a vital "bridge" in cross-cultural understanding. So, they do all the best to build a large multi-cultural "building".

The V.I.P. section of OISS web-site is one of their initiatives where international students and visitors can present their own countries - history, geography, cultural habits. You can travel around all over the world only by reading these travel notes. In December issue (2011) of the web-site, people can learn more about the ancient Bulgaria and especially about the capital of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom - Veliko Tarnovo. I hope everybody could feel the glory of my small country and the beauty of my home town, because I wrote that report with all my passion and emotion. On February I put the same feelings when I told women from different nationalities about Bulgarian custom to wear "martenitsa" and taught them how to make it. It was one of the most exciting international ladies' meetings! It was amazing when I saw Chinese, Indian and European women twisting the white and red threads and forming traditional Bulgarian "martenica" dolls "Pijo and Penda"! Each of them brought a small piece of Bulgaria in their homes. And according to the Bulgarian tradition, the OISS office was decorated with Bulgarian "martenitsa" on the 1st of March as wish for health and good luck to all international visitors. One of the most exciting events, organized by OISS, was the International Fair on March. Foreign visitors and students at Rice presented their countries by souvenirs, posters, presentations and mainly by food. Everybody can come and try traditional dishes - from hot Indian curry, Chinese dumpling, Mexican nachos to Iranian "shavarma" and Bulgarian "banitsa". I represented Bulgaria with Bulgarian style decorated table and 4 popular Bulgarian dishes: cheese pie "banitsa", sweet nut pie "baklava", hand-made bread "pogacha" and spicy meat "pastarma". I was surprised - all the food was gone in about 20 minutes! "Banitsa" and "baklava" was among the most liked dishes of the fair.

The main reason, I visited USA, was my research on project "Nano-engineered coatings on titanium implants". Fulbright grant gave me opportunity to work in one of the high-ranked universities in the USA and in the world as well. Rice University is private research university, established in 1912 in Houston, Texas. In 2011 Rice was ranked 17th among national universities by U.S. News and World Report. In 2010 it was ranked

99th internationally (54th nationally) by the Academic Ranking of World Universities. The university has produced 101 Fulbright Scholars. Rice University has a very high level of research activity for its size, with \$115.3 million in sponsored research funding in 2011. Rice is noted for its applied science programs in the field of nanotechnology. It was ranked 1st in the world in Materials Science research by the Times Higher Education (THE) in 2010.

I was in the right place to work on my project. The group of my host - Prof. Pulickel Ajayan consists of more than 50 peoples: PhD fellows, graduate and under-graduate students. All they work on synthesis of different nanomaterials – Carbon Nano-Tubes (CNT), graphene, BN structures etc. Prof. Ajayan was part of the team of the Japanese Prof. S.Iijima in development of the CNT in 1980s. He is one of the first scientists observed CNT by Transmission Electron Microscopy. He has been part of two Guinness Book of World records, one for the creation of the smallest brush and the other for creating the darkest material. The Prof. Ajayan's research group aims application of the new synthesized materials, that's why it has funding support of different organizations: National Science Foundation, Army Research Office and Laboratory, Advanced Energy Consortium and others. The laboratory is equipped with modern technique for synthesis, which is explored very intensely. Rice University has a division with high-class equipment available for characterization of the new materials. Every student or researcher can use it after preliminary training. It is real pleasure to work on the up-to-date Scanning Electron Microscopy, Transmission Electron Microscopy, Atomic Force Microscopy or XRD-analyzer.



Fulbrighters at Alabama State University

For that reason Rice University is a place where the “fullerene” – third polymorphic modification of the carbon was invented by Richard Smalley, Robert Curl, James Heath, Sean O'Brian and Harold Kroto. A “fullerene” is any molecule composed entirely of carbon, in the form of a hollow sphere, ellipsoid or tube. Spherical fullerenes are also called “buckyballs”, and they resemble the balls used in association football. Kroto, Curl, and Smalley were awarded the 1996 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their roles in the discovery of this class of molecules. If you want to learn more about this invention you can start your walk from the pedestrian alley and read on the posters the entire history of Rice University since its establishment in 1912 till now. After that you can stop at the entrance of the Space Science and Technology Building and take picture of the sign “Discovery of Fullerenes”. If you need more information you can find it at the Chemistry Department on the third floor. There are many scientific papers, newspapers and pictures. And there are also people of the Nobel Prize group still working there... If you have luck, you can even meet them. I was so amazed when I met several times one of the “fullerene” inventors! I have never believed that I will examine my samples in the same department where “fullerene” was discovered! It was great honor for me to work in the same university and in the same field as these great scientists!

But the most impressive event, I have participated during my stay in the USA, was the Fulbright Visiting Scholar seminar in Birmingham, organized by the International Services Council of Alabama. The main topic was: “Human Rights: Building a Society that Protects Human Rights and Celebrates Ethnicity”. We met Fulbrighters from all over the world – more than



The Bulgarian table at the International fair, Rice University



Prof. Pulickel Ajayan's group

75 people, working in different fields in different American states. We visited many museums, historical places, schools, communities and American homes. We had a very emotional lectures and talks, given by famous speakers.

I have never known before how difficult the black people's lives was even till the 1970s years of the last century! How different it was in comparison with the white people's lives: different houses, different churches, different schools, even different places in the back side of the bus! I have only heard about the Ku Klux Klan organization and the fight of Dr. Martin Luther King for the human rights of the black people. But

to understand and feel what the reality was people have to go and visit the exciting museums of Rosa Parks in Montgomery and Birmingham Civil Rights Institute.

Our next exciting visit was in the Seth Johnson School. We had a meeting with students who were very interested in the countries we came from. They were interested in everything – geographical location, climate, flora and fauna, habits, songs, dances... Their eyes were wide opened and they exclaimed every time they saw interesting picture, or listened to nice music during the presentation of each of our countries.

The main goal of the seminar was to bring together Visiting Scholars from around the world to discuss an issue of global importance, as well as to foster professional networks. Thankfully to the very rich program and the excellent organization of Jacqui Shipe and event staff, the Birmingham seminar achieved this aim. It made us, Fulbrighters from different countries, to realize that if we want our children to have a better life in the future, we have to fight now. And our fight will be successful only if we joint our efforts all over the world.

References:

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3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rice_University
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**БЪЛГАРО-АМЕРИКАНСКА КОМИСИЯ
ЗА ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЕН ОБМЕН "ФУЛБРАЙТ"**

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Out of America

Sophia meets Sofia

Sophia Kleinsasser

Sophia Kleinsasser is an English teaching assistant at Dimcho Debelyanov School in Sofia. Born and raised in Seattle, Washington, she attended the University of San Francisco and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in International Studies in 2010. Her side project is to create a dialogue-based tolerance and diversity workshop curriculum for Bulgarian high school students, entitled "Learning through our Differences."

When I returned to Bulgaria for my second year as an English Teaching Assistant, I was definitely excited about the novelty of living in a city with which I share a name. Also exciting was the prospect of teaching at Dimcho Debelyanov School, arguably one of the most unique schools in the country as it is the only one that offers Hebrew as foreign language. Being historically associated with Bulgaria's Jewish community, Dimcho Debelyanov receives support for several programs from global Jewish educational networks like The Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. These programs include a multimedia studio, robotics lab and a photography club. The school participates in an exchange program with Israeli students, giving our students the opportunity to share Bulgarian traditions and culture with them. It is also located within walking distance from Sofia's Synagogue, arguably one of the most beautiful buildings in the city.

Cultural exchange is one of the most fundamental aspects of the Fulbright program. I appreciate my role as an English Teaching Assistant because not only do I support my students' confidence in their use of English, but I also support them in other ways through our interactions outside of the classroom. The

result of these interactions is always an interesting learning experience for me. An example of this was a field trip I took with one class to commemorate the life of Dimitar Peshev, Bulgaria's Minister of Justice during the Second World War. Peshev is remembered for halting the deportation of Bulgaria's Jewish population when Bulgaria was allied with Nazi Germany. The presence of students from the so-called Jewish School at the small ceremony held outside of Peshev's former apartment was significant in its symbolism. I learned from talking with them about the event afterwards that they (those who identify as Jewish) were raised with the belief that their existence was in no small part thanks to this man, who until quite recently was relatively unknown in Bulgaria's public consciousness. Sharing this event with them and discussing their own notions of identity helped me to better understand the unique intersection of cultural, linguistic and religious signifiers within the school.



Engaging with students outside of the classroom also means supporting and congratulating their achievements. I worked with one 11th grade student on her draft for an essay competition, sponsored by the American Embassy, on multiculturalism. I guided her through the important pre-writing process and, I think, helped provoke some new insights from her own experience to add to the essay. I told her that the best piece of writing she could create would be one that highlighted her own perspective and opinions, which is not the traditional writing style mostly taught at school. It was a challenging and rewarding experience, and I am happy to say that she won the competition. Another student achievement I was invited to be part of was a radio interview which two students from another class had the opportunity to host. The topic of the interview was the recently proposed international anti-counterfeiting trade agreement (ACTA). I was impressed by my students' professionalism and political consciousness, and especially their initiative to take action on an issue that was important to them.



One piece of advice I have for future ETAs is to interact with your students outside of the classroom as much as possible. Find out what their interests are, and ask them to invite you to their performances and sporting events. I found out that a few girls in one class were passionate ice skaters, so we organized going skating together after school in the winter. Many

of them will be endlessly curious about you (an American living in our town?!), and you can start to develop great relationships by sharing something about yourself. Social networking can be a great tool, as well, and you can keep in touch with students even after the school year ends.

I am very happy with my decision to stay in Bulgaria for a second year. While the initial excitement may have worn off, I am still surprised and delighted by new experiences here. Now that the cold winter weather has finally worn off, I look forward to hiking Mount Vitoshka with friends, continuing to work on improving my teaching and hopefully my Bulgarian!

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