

J. William Fulbright Commission
for Educational Exchange
in the Slovak Republic

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

For the U.S. Government Fiscal Year:
October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024
Academic Year 2023-24

Lýdia Tobiášová – Executive Director
November 2024

A. THE COMMISSION

The J. William Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic is a bi-national, not-for-profit organization, whose mission is to promote mutual understanding and cooperation between the people of the United States of America and the Slovak Republic through educational and cultural exchanges.

The Commission was established by an executive agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the United States of America in 1994 (319/1994 Coll.). The subsequent agreement signed in 2005 (98/2005 Coll.) was amended in 2017 (303/2017 Coll.). In 2017, the Slovak authorities started issuing national visas to Fulbright scholarship recipients and their dependents who have been exempted from visa fees since.

The main responsibilities of the Commission are as follows:

- administer grants and fellowships for U.S. and Slovak nationals to study, research, or lecture;
- identify and select the best candidates in both countries and engage them in academic exchanges within the highest standards of the Fulbright Program;
- identify fields in which mutual cooperation is desirable to further develop and increase expertise in particular fields;
- extend activities by establishing and supporting cost sharing programs with participating institutions;
- spread awareness and provide information about study and research opportunities in the United States.

In addition to the administration of the Fulbright Program, the Commission is the only official institution in Slovakia certified to provide accurate, comprehensive, and current information about studies in the U.S. through its educational advising center [EducationUSA](#), which is part of the worldwide educational advising network of the U.S. Department of State.

The Fulbright Commission is governed by the bi-national **Board of the Commission** which oversees the operation and activities of the Commission. The Minister of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic appoints Slovak Board members and the U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic appoints American Board members. Both serve as Honorary Co-Chairpersons of the Board of the Commission.

The Board has the responsibility for setting long term goals and priorities of the program, program activities, selection and nomination of grantees, and coordination of finances of the Commission.

Honorary Co-Chairpersons:

Daniel BÚTORA	Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (until October 2023)
Tomáš DRUCKER	Minister of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic (from October 2023)
Gautam RANA	U.S. Ambassador to the Slovak Republic (since September 2022)

U.S. Members:

Tamara STERNBERG-GRELLER	Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S Embassy Bratislava, Treasurer (until July 2024)
Elizabeth BLUMENTHAL	Counselor for Public Affairs, U.S Embassy Bratislava, Treasurer (from July 2024)
Benjamin COHEN	Cultural Affairs Officer, U.S. Embassy Bratislava
Linda STEYNE	Lecturer at the Department of British and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava
Alan DYKSTRA	Freelance Consultant/Educator

Slovak Members:

Jozef BÁTORA	Professor, Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava (until March, 28, 2023)
Denisa KOTEREC - FRELICHOVÁ	Director- General, Section of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (since July 11, 2023 until 2023 until March, 28, 2024)
Juraj MACHÁČ	Director- General, Personal Office of the Minister, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (from March 28, 2024)
Daniela OSTATNÍKOVÁ	Professor, Head of the Institute of Physiology, Comenius University in Bratislava
Marcel VYSOCKÝ	Director General, Section of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic, Alternate Treasurer
Peter RUSIŇÁK	Deputy Director, AmCham (from March, 28, 2024)

The Commission Staff:

Lýdia TOBIÁŠOVÁ	Executive Director
Denisa DOMARACKÁ	Finance Officer
Silvia MIADOKOVÁ	Program and Study Officer/EducationUSA Adviser
Dáša TAKO VELICHOVÁ	Program Officer

B. FULBRIGHT AWARDS

The Commission administers a variety of awards for both U.S. and Slovak citizens based on an open, merit-based competition and takes into account recommendations of selection committees focusing on professional skills, academic achievements, financial means available, and other program requirements; and announces the final nomination of Fulbright grantees.

The academic year 2023-24 had a standard cohort selected the year prior. The total number of participants in Fulbright programs administered by the Commission reached 39.

- **Fulbright Student Program**

Slovak and U.S. graduate students can apply for 6 to 9 month scholarships to carry out independent research or study at Slovak or U.S. institutions, respectively. Candidates are required to prove an outstanding academic record and submit high-quality and well-conceived projects.

Slovak applicants may conduct an independent research, and if funding available, enroll in Master's programs. Fulbright Slovak Student Program is open to any field except for clinical medicine, M.BA and LL.M. Candidates without prior extensive U.S. study experience are given preference.

U.S. applicants can pursue individual research projects under tutorial of a Slovak expert in the respective field. Knowledge of Slovak language is desirable for commensurate with the level needed in fields like political science, history, linguistics, and anthropology.

SK Students:

Name	Jana LOKAJOVÁ
Category	Research
Host Institution	Rutgers University, School of Communication and Information
Home Institution	Charles University (CZ), Faculty of Arts, Department of Slavic Philology
Discipline/Specialization	Linguistics/Sociolinguistic
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Monika VOJTEKOVÁ
Category	Research
Host Institution	University of Massachusetts – Lowell, Francis College of Engineering
Home Institution	Comenius University, Faculty of Management, Bratislava
Discipline/Specialization	Business/Business, Management, & Marketing
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	

US Students:

Name	Duncan MacLean Eaton
Category	Open Research
Host Institution	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University, Faculty of Arts, Department of History
Home Institution	Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
Discipline/Specialization	History
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Caleb Ranum
Category	Open Research
Host Institution	Constantine the Philosopher University, Faculty of Arts, Department of Archaeology
Home Institution	University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL

- U.S. Student Duncan Eaton attended the EU-US Young Leaders Seminar, held in Brussels from March 20–22, 2024, which brought together 25 young leaders from the U.S. and 25 EU alumni to discuss "The Security Implications of Climate Change." Co-financed by the European Commission and the U.S. Department of State, this seminar provided a collaborative space for participants to explore the complex intersections of climate and security. Through panels, workshops, and discussions, participants gained insights into transatlantic approaches to climate-related security challenges, strengthening international understanding and networks.

- **Fulbright Scholar Program**

U.S. scholars with comprehensive experience propose projects on research or lecturing at Slovak institutions. The applications are welcomed in any field; although preference may be given to the needs of Slovak academic institutions. Candidates without extensive research or lecturing experience in the Slovak Republic are given preference.

Slovak scholars who hold a Ph.D. degree (in arts and some other fields comparable professional experience is required) must include an invitation letter from the U.S. institution in their application. All areas of research or lecturing, except clinical medicine, are eligible. Candidates without prior extensive U.S. research or study experience are given preference.

SK Scholars:

Name	Miroslav Caboň
Category	Research
Host Institution	University of Florida, Department of Plant Pathology, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences
Home Institution	Slovak Academy of Sciences, Lab. Of Molecular Ecology and Mycology

Discipline/Specialization	Biology
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Zuzana Hrubšová
Category	Research
Host Institution	Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, The University of Pennsylvania, Perelman School of Medicine
Home Institution	Pediatric Cardiac Center, National Institute for Cardiovascular Diseases
Discipline/Specialization	Medical Sciences
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Nad'a Labajová
Category	Research
Host Institution	Harvard University, Wyss Institute
Home Institution	Institute of Molecular Biology, Slovak Academy of Sciences
Discipline/Specialization	Biology
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Šimon Mackovjak
Category	Research
Host Institution	Boston University, Center for Space Physics
Home Institution	Institute of Experimental Physics, Slovak Academy of Sciences
Discipline/Specialization	Astronomy
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Juraj Országh
Category	Research
Host Institution	Auburn University; Leach Science Center
Home Institution	Comenius University, Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Informatics
Discipline/Specialization	Physics
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Denisa Osinová
Category	Teaching
Host Institution	Loma Linda University
Home Institution	Jessenius faculty of medicine in Martin, Comenius University; University Hospital Martin
Discipline/Specialization	Medical Sciences

Project Title	
Months/Start Date	

- Šimon Mackovjak delivered two talks at the Center for Space Physics at Boston University's College of Arts & Sciences. He also presented at the event hosted by the Slovak PRO, in collaboration with Czech Café Boston and the Czech and Slovak Association Boston, at Harvard University. The event featured Slovak astrophysicists from Harvard, MIT, and BU, offering attendees an inspiring dive into the mysteries of the universe.
- Denisa Osinová volunteered at Loma Linda University, where she joined an outreach project—participating in a missionary trip to an orphanage and women's shelter in Mexico. Her contribution to this service project was warmly welcomed and appreciated by the university's leadership

US Scholars:

Name	Ermanno Affuso
Category	Research
Host Institution	Technical University of Košice
Home Institution	University of South Alabama, Department of Economics, Finance, and Real Estate
Discipline/Specialization	Economics
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Peter Burzynski
Category	Teaching/ Research
Host Institution	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
Home Institution	Milwaukee Area Technical College, Department of English
Discipline/Specialization	Writing
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	
Name	Bari Hochwald Cagnola
Category	Teaching/Professional Project
Host Institution	Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava
Home Institution	The Global Theatre Project
Discipline/Specialization	Drama/Theater Arts
Project Title	
Months/Start Date	

- Bari Hochwald Cagnola, Fulbright scholar — Art for Social Renewal Project in Bratislava (May 5, 2024). ED Lýdia Tobiášová and Program officer Dáša Tako participated on the final event hosted by US Fulbright scholar Bari Hochwald Cagnola who led a meaningful *Art for Social Renewal* community workshop in Bratislava, in collaboration with students from VŠMU. This bilingual gathering brought together local residents and artists for a few hours of creativity, connection, and fun. The *Art for Social Renewal* project, developed as part of Bari's Fulbright work, aimed to strengthen communities through art, and provided a space for neighbors to interact, create, and build friendships through various artistic activities. Attendees of all ages joined in the creative process, transforming their neighborhood and enjoying the chance to bring beauty, joy, and sense of community to their lives.
 - Peter Burzynski's poetry reading during the "Europe Day" (May 9, 2024) an event organized by the Comenius University's Faculty of Arts, where Peter was invited to present his work. Some of his work was inspired by his stay in Slovakia and created during his Fulbright stay in Košice. He also held a well-attended poetry reading in November at the American Center in Košice, drawing an audience that included his students, fellow Fulbright scholars, and members of the public.
- **English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program**

The Slovak secondary schools receive assistance in strengthening English language instructions by establishing a qualified native speaker presence. At the same time, U.S. participants gain from intensive cross-cultural interaction and research opportunities.

Due to the increase of SK funds, priority has been given to the ETA program which has grown from 8 grants in 2020 to 14 grants in 2023-24. ETAs are evenly distributed among 8 regions, mostly outside the big towns and are placed in the variety of schools – grammar schools, vocational schools, public or religious schools. The ETA program is very popular and there is a high demand from Slovak secondary schools to host an ETA. The number of US applicants is also gradually increasing.

Name	Dylan Jacy Brown
Host Institution	Gymnázium Antona Bernoláka, Senec
Home Institution	Florida International University, Miami, FL
Major	International Relations
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Elijah Gentry Cooper
Host Institution	Gymnázium, Poštová 9 Košice
Home Institution	University of Louisville, Louisville, KY
Major	Human Rights & Political Science/Social Change, Sociology, LGBT Studies, and Race/Gender Studies
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Emily Mary Kapner
Host Institution	Gymnázium Boženy Slančíkovej-Timravy, Lučenec

Home Institution	Franklin and Marshall College, PA
Major	Government & Psychology
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Maggie Deborah Kergick
Host Institution	Gymnázium, Lipany
Home Institution	Lebanon Valley College, Annville, PA
Major	English, Secondary Education
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Sydney Hope Leiter
Host Institution	Gymnázium Andreja Vrábla, Levice
Home Institution	University of Georgia, Athens, GA
Major	Nonprofit Management and Leadership
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Claire Marie Maurer
Host Institution	Gymnázium Cyrila Daxnera, Vranov nad Topľou
Home Institution	University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL
Major	Psychology/Anthropology, Criminal Justice
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Gideon Andrew Perez
Host Institution	Gymnázium, Myjava
Home Institution	Luther College, Decorah, IA
Major	English, Creative Writing
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Sadie Pichelmann
Host Institution	Gymnázium V. Paulínyho – Tótha, Martin
Home Institution	Luther College, Decorah, IA
Major	History/Biology, Music
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Madison Elizabeth Pickering
Host Institution	Gymnázium I. Kupca, Hlohovec
Home Institution	Ball State University, Muncie, IN
Major	Theatre Production - Directing/American Sign Language
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	

Name	Rachel Helen Rozenfeld
Host Institution	Stredná odborná škola Jána Antonína Baťu, Partizánske
Home Institution	Amherst College, Amherst, MA
Major	Russian, (Ancient) Greek
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Sianna Lee Serio
Host Institution	Hotelová akadémia, Žilina
Home Institution	University of Maryland - Baltimore County, Baltimore, MD
Major	Computer Science/Applied Linguistics
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Grace Hally Van Vessem
Host Institution	Obchodná akadémia, Šurany
Home Institution	University at Buffalo, Buffalo, NY
Major	Public Health/Environmental Studies
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Kristen Ashleigh Lynn Wagoner
Host Institution	Stredná odborná škola hotelových služieb a obchodu, Zvolen
Home Institution	Palm Beach Atlantic University, West Palm Beach, FL
Major	Psychology/Studio Art
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	
Name	Isabella Nizhoni Werner
Host Institution	Spojená škola, Sečovce
Home Institution	Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ
Major	Computer Systems Engineering (Cybersecurity)
Project Title	TESOL
Months/Start Date	

- Program officer Silvia Miadoková conducted 12 visits on high schools, which served to monitor the English teaching assistants in Slovakia. The main purpose was to observe their teaching activities, well-being, and overall experience. Furthermore program coordinator discussed any issues ETAs had with their respective mentors. In all schools Silvia Miadoková, in her capacity as EducationUSA advisor, gave a presentation on undergraduate studies in the United States; 5 *Steps to U.S. Study*.

- Dylan Brown, in collaboration with the Institute of Matej Bel, developed *RomAnthology*, an innovative digital project dedicated to combating stereotypes and celebrating Romani cultural heritage. The project combines digital and physical artworks with interactive learning resources, featuring self-depicted narratives from diverse Romani communities in Slovakia. Through documentaries, photographs, oral histories, visual arts, and written works, *RomAnthology* challenges common misconceptions and promotes positive narratives. This anthology, curated for both Roma and non-Roma audiences, seeks to empower Romani people to control their own narratives and bridge cultural divides, filling a crucial gap in advocacy through artistic expression and education.
- Between October 26–29, Slovak Fulbright grantees participated in a Media Literacy Seminar hosted by Fulbright Hungary in Budapest, joining fellow Fulbrighters from Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. The seminar featured insightful lectures from Hungarian and American Fulbrighters and media experts, offering a valuable exchange of ideas and networking opportunities. Attendees learned about tools for protecting online privacy, like CryptPad, Signal, Tresorit, and the Brave Browser, practised live interviews, and recognizing media bias in all its forms. Overall, the seminar enriched grantees' understanding of media literacy in today's digital landscape.
- On October 11 and 12, 2023 American Days in Žilina and Martin took place. Program Officer Silvia Miadoková conducted outreach activities for Fulbright Programs in both cities and provided students with basic information on studying in the US representing EducationUSA advising center. Sianna Serio and Dylan Brown supported the outreach activities.
- ETA Emily Kapner attended the EU-NATO Seminar, held from February 20–24, 2024. Seminar offered an exceptional opportunity for young leaders to engage with key political and diplomatic figures. Participants had the privilege of meeting the President of Luxembourg and the U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg, observing a European Court of Justice hearing, and dining with Koen Lenaerts, President of the European Court of Justice. The seminar also included briefings at NATO Headquarters and educational sessions at the European Commission and European Parliament. This immersive experience provided valuable insights into EU governance, international diplomacy, and NATO operations.
- ETA Dylan Brown hosted a webinar *The Roots and Influence of Hip Hop - Fundamentals of Black American History* (February 29, 2024). The webinar examined the global influence of Black American history from historical to contemporary racial issues and celebrating Black American culture through the lens of hip hop. The event, held during Black History Month, emphasized the achievements and resilience of Black individuals across history, highlighting their ongoing impact on culture and society. Dylan, a Fulbright ETA based in Senec, with a background in international relations and human rights, also shared her experiences working with Slovak NGOs on minority rights. Dylan later held a similar presentation for the students of Matej Bel University, as she was invited as a guest speaker by lecturer Michael Dove from the Department of English and American Studies.

- Fulbright Specialist Program

Slovak academic institutions can invite a U.S. expert for 2 to 6 weeks to lecture, assist in developing curricula and educational materials, participate or lead seminars and/or workshops, etc.

The program is a short-term complement to the traditional Fulbright Scholar Program. It attracts those U.S. experts who otherwise would not be able to participate in one or two semester program.

Name	Jon COX
Host Institution	Matej Bel University, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Home Institution	University of Delaware
Discipline/Specialization	Education
Months/Start Date	
Name	Wendell Hume GODDARD
Host Institution	Comenius University, Faculty of Law
Requesting/Responsible person	
Home Institution	Goddard Law Offices, Berkeley, California
Discipline/Project Title	Law/Enhancing Internationalization in Legal Education
Length/Start Date	
Name	Christopher STECKER
Host Institution	Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice
Requesting/Responsible person	
Home Institution	Boys Town National Research Hospital
Discipline/Project Title	
Length/Start Date	
Name	Charles ALAIMO
Host Institution	MAREENA
Requesting/Responsible person	
Home Institution	Group One Trading, LP
Discipline/Project Title	
Length/Start Date	
Name	David BRIDGES
Host Institution	Digital Coalition
Requesting/Responsible person	
Home Institution	Georgia Institute of Technology
Discipline/Project Title	Public Administration/Building links in Lifelong Learning & Innovation Development

Length/Start Date	
*ECA funded upon request	
Name	Samer HAMDAR
Host Institution	University of Žilina
Requesting/Responsible person	
Home Institution	The George Washington University
Discipline/Project Title	Engineering Education/ Establishing collaboration between UNIZA and GWU on CCAM
Length/Start Date	
Name	Zuzana TOMAS
Host Institution	Matej Bel University
Requesting/Responsible person	
Home Institution	Eastern Michigan University
Discipline/Project Title	Education/Supporting Candidate Teachers in global competencies
Length/Start Date	
*ECA fully funded	
Name	Robert THOMAS
Host Institution	Technical University of Košice
Requesting/Responsible person	
Home Institution	Georgia Institute of Technology
Discipline/Project Title	Peace & Conflict Resolution/Peace Engineering Approach in Addressing the War in Ukraine
Length/Start Date	

- **David Bridges** has signed a Memorandum of Understanding between Slovak Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth and Georgia Tech. This partnership, made possible through his Fulbright stay, aims to enhance innovation and entrepreneurship in Slovakia by fostering collaboration in technology transfer, startup development, and education.
- **Robert Thomas** focused on integrating peace engineering into the activities of the Technical University of Košice (TUKE), particularly in relation to the conflict in Ukraine. His work included organizing a side meeting at the Globsec Forum, providing guidance to faculty at both TUKE and Uzhhorod University, and fostering collaborations with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Carpathian Foundation. These efforts aimed at enhancing academic and organizational engagement in peace engineering and post-conflict recovery.

- Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence (S-I-R) Program

Scholar-In-Residence Program assists U.S. higher education institutions in expanding academic exchange programs. By supporting non-U.S. Scholars through grants for teaching at institutions with no strong international component, both the U.S. institution and the scholar grantee benefit. The Commission has not received any application for S-I-R program from US institutions.

- Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program

The Commission has launched the Fulbright TEA Program in the academic year 2021-22. The FTEA program brings international secondary-level teachers to the U.S. for a six-week professional development opportunity to take academic seminars at a host university, observe and share their expertise with U.S. teachers and students, and develop action plans to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills in their home schools, classrooms, and communities.

3 out of 4 nominated candidates were selected by the U.S. Department of State.

Name	Natália GETTLEROVÁ
Host Institution	University of Northern Colorado, CO
Home Institution	Gymnázium Jána Adama Raymana, Prešov
Cohort Specialization	Media Literacy
Weeks/Start Date	
Name	Daniel GONOS
Host Institution	University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI
Home Institution	Obchodná akadémia, Trebišov
Cohort Specialization	Media Literacy
Weeks/Start Date	
Name	Lenka ZGÚTOVÁ
Host Institution	University of Wisconsin-Madison, WI
Home Institution	Gymnázium P.O. Hviezdoslava, Dolný Kubín
Cohort Specialization	Media Literacy
Weeks/Start Date	

C. OTHER AWARDS

1. Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

The program gives opportunity to mid-career professionals to participate in 10-month study and related professional experience at U.S. institutions in fields such as environmental management, finances, human resources management, urban planning, communications, drug abuse education, etc. Final selection of nominees from over 150 countries is made at the U.S. Department of State.

Name	Lívia ELKOVÁ
Host Institution	University of Minnesota (LTE University of Illinois)
Home Institution	Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family
Field of Study	Public Policy and Human Rights
Months/Start Date	

- After successful completion of the Humphrey Program in August 2023, a [Humphrey alumna Gabriela Mezeiova](#) has been selected as a recipient of a [2023 Humphrey Fellowship Alumni Impact Award](#). Her project called DearTomorrow: Dear Slovakia will be conducted through cooperation between Slovak NGO Slovak Eco Quality and U.S. partner DearTomorrow and aims to adapt DearTomorrow educational resources to Slovak context, enhance skills of educators in climate communication and public engagement, increase awareness and commitment among workshop participants regarding climate change, and provide valuable resources to the educational community to promote climate justice actions. The project also involves piloting immersive storytelling and arts experiences in Slovakia and fostering reflective engagement on climate crisis and individual roles in finding solutions.

2. Study of the U.S. Institutes (SUSIs)

Name	Kristián OLÁH
Category	Student Leaders
Theme	Civic Engagement
Home Institution	Technical University of Košice
Name	Andrea BOBENIČOVÁ
Category	Student Leaders
Theme	Civic Engagement
Home Institution	Technical University of Košice

Name	Ján BULECA
Category	Scholar
Theme	U.S. Economics & Sustainable Development Institute
Home Institution	Technical University of Košice
Name	Zuzana POKLEBOVÁ
Category	Scholar
Theme	American Politics & Political Thought
Home Institution	University of Prešov
Name	Zuzana PETERNAI
Category	Secondary Educators
Theme	Administrator
Home Institution	Pázmány Péter Gimnázium (Hungarian), Nové Zámky

3. Ronald and Eileen Weiser Professional Development Award

The Weiser Award (not sponsored by the U.S. Department of State) gives opportunity to Slovak scholars to pursue short-term research visits at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In the academic year 2023-24 the Weiser center extended the visits from 4-6 weeks to 2-3 months.

Candidates may submit projects in any field of research or teaching with faculty partners at the University of Michigan. These awards are made possible thanks to a gift from Ambassador Ronald Weiser, U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia from 2001-04, and his wife, Eileen Lappin Weiser.

Adriana Duriš Adameová from the Faculty of Pharmacy, Comenius University in Bratislava became a new Weiser fellow granted a 6-week visit.

D. GRANT SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES

The Commission carries out different activities throughout the year to support Fulbright programs, grantees and alumni, such as recruitment campaigns, selections of candidates for each program, promotional and outreach activities, educational advising, and hosting or supporting events, seminars and conferences, whether on-line or in-person.

- **The Orientation Program**

Regular orientation seminars are being held for both Slovak and American grantees and are mandatory components of the Fulbright program.

- **Orientation Seminar for Incoming U.S. grantees** was organized from September 3 to 8, 2023 in order to familiarize U.S. grantees with Slovak history, cultural and social background, economy, education system etc. Furthermore, a review of the terms and conditions of their grant, financial, visa, and health issues are an essential part of the orientation. A crash course on Slovak language has proven to be of importance to U.S. grantees. The Commission annually reviews and updates the program in order to implement the guidance and protocol for a variety of possible crisis situations, diversity & equity & inclusion, mental health and well-being, and other emerging issues. Regional diversity coordinator for Europe and Eurasia, Ms. Delphine Perchec, visited the orientation and gave a presentation on...and had one session with US grantees. The orientation is also a platform to meet and network with fellow grantees as well as representatives of the U.S. Embassy, Fulbright alumni and organizations and institutions involved in Slovak-American exchanges and relations.
- **Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar** is mandatory for all outgoing Slovak grantees in order to brief them on important issues related to their departure from the U.S. and the successful completion of their grant. On June 17, 2024, the Commission held an in-person PDO meeting for grantees. The PDO's main agenda included the terms and conditions of the Fulbright awards, visa applications, health insurance, and financial aspects of the awards. All Slovak Fulbright and Humphrey grantees except Fulbright Schuman grantee (Laura Jágelková) attended the event. Grantees also met with Jana Lokajová – Fulbright Student alumna and Naďa Labajová – Fulbright Scholar alumna, as well as the U.S. Embassy representatives who all shared their practical advice with the grantees.

- **The Mid-Year Conference**

Mid-year conference for U.S. grantees took place in Hotel Panorama in Trenčianske Teplice (February 1 to 4, 2024). After the arrival, grantees enjoyed social activities and quiz on Slovakia. The following day started with presentations of ETAs on teaching English at secondary schools in Slovakia. Further, presentations of US students and US scholars on their professional and personal experience in Slovakia followed. We also welcomed English language fellows from Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tristan Hicks and Erik Wennermark, who held two workshops on Media Literacy and Communicative Teaching Strategies & Social Emotional Learning. Interactive seminar on current issues was held by Eva Frantová, alumna of the Fulbright regional seminar for journalists. The conference wrapped up with a dance workshop. Mr. Benjamin Cohen from the U.S. Embassy also joined the conference for the most part.

- **The Certificate Award Ceremony**

Certificate Award Ceremony (May 17, 2024), hosted by the U.S. Ambassador in Slovakia Gautam Rana was held at his residence in Bratislava to celebrate the achievements of U.S. Fulbright grantees currently in Slovakia and recent SK alumni who have returned from their stay in the U.S. The event recognized their dedication, hard work, and contributions to their fields, international education, and cultural exchange.

- **EducationUSA Advising Center**

The EducationUSA Advising Center of the Commission as part of the worldwide network of the U.S. Department of State provides current, unbiased, and realistic information on study programs in the U.S., counseling on all matters connected with the U.S. educational system, U.S. standardized tests, application procedures, financial aid, visa issues, etc. to the interested public. It operates daily and provides free consulting services upon appointment.

The Center supports and trains the employees of American Corners located in public libraries in Banská Bystrica and Košice. The centers are a common effort of the U.S. Department of State and U.S. embassies with the aim of providing better resources for people seeking information on the United States. The Center also serves U.S. partners and institutions as a source of information on Slovak and European higher education systems, e.g. verification and explanation of Slovak credentials, providing resources of information, etc.

Regular visits to high schools hosting ETAs are of a high importance. These visits are connected with EducationUSA outreach activities and advising services for high school students outside of the capital.

- **5 Steps To U.S. Study** - EducationUSA Advisor conducted in-person presentations for 12 high school students over the academic year 2023/2024. The presentation focused on study possibilities at universities in the U.S. It also included a short comparison of the Slovak and American school systems and standardized tests, and students were presented with additional options for academic exchange.
- **International Education Week**: On November 15, 2023 College Application Essays Webinar led by Sydney Leiter in cooperation with EducationUSA took place. About 25 participants were present and actively engaged in the activities. After the webinar, ETA Sydney Leiter recorded a concluding video which was published on Fulbright Commission social media along with 5 other videos prepared for International Education Week.
- **Meeting with RELO**: On December 4, 2023 FC staff was invited to meet with new RELO who visited U.S. Embassy in Bratislava. We discussed the Fulbright Program in Slovakia, potential RELO support for ETAs and all English teachers in Slovakia.
- **Webinar Yale Young Global Scholars**: EducationUSA webinar was scheduled for 18th December 2023. A high school student Jakub introduced to participants Yale Young Global Scholars (YYGS) Program, one of the most globally diverse, two-week academic summer programs in the world. The webinar was held in Slovak language.
- **EducationUSA Networking Event in Prague (June 25, 2024)**. EducationUSA coordinator Silvia Miadoková took part in the networking event in Prague where she met both potential partners and students studying or seeking study in the U.S.. Multiple sport agencies, such as USA Sport & Study, stipendia.cz, and Sportegy Futures attended, with whom Silvia Miadoková previously organized presentation on Athletic scholarships in Nitra. Among the most positive discussions was an informal talk with Bakala Foundations representatives who mentioned the possibility of creating a scholarship for Slovak students. Networking event was organized by our close

partner EducationUSA Czech Republic. Before the event, the EducationUSA coordinator visited the Czech Fulbright Commission office.

- **Alumni**

The Commission continues to deepen the collaboration with the community of Fulbright alumni, especially with the Slovak Fulbright Alumni Association (SFAA). Fulbright alumni assist the Commission in different ways, i.e. they serve as consultants and evaluators of project proposals, participate at orientation seminars and mid-year conferences, serve as initial connection with the host country and help grantees with different issues that occur prior (when preparing for the stay) and during their stay, and thus, help to promote the goals of the Fulbright Program. The Commission will also continue to encourage alumni to participate in the events and activities of the Commission.

Commission-supported alumni activities:

- **Soccer under the swastika - The Psychology of Survival and Resistance (March 21, 2024).** Dáša Tako Velichová visited Žilina on the occasion of the presentation of professor Kevin Simpson, a former Fulbright Specialist in Slovakia at a cultural space Nová synagóga v Žiline. The event focused on the little-known role of football in Nazi ghettos and camps, where prisoners used the sport as a form of resistance and survival. Simpson, a psychology professor at John Brown University, provided insights into the resilience of Holocaust survivors and examined the psychological profiles of perpetrators and bystanders. The lecture was held in English, with Slovak translation.
- **Application of Innovative Methods in Teaching (Experiences from U.S. High Schools), (April 23, 2024).** Lenka Zgútová, an alumna of the Fulbright Teaching Excellence and Achievement Program, led a webinar for educators providing insights into U.S. high school teaching practices. Lenka shared practical methods adaptable to Slovak schools, covering topics like well-being in the classroom, fostering a positive climate, edutainment, online platforms, creative tools, project-based learning, AI in education, critical thinking, and media literacy. Lenka, a high school teacher with 20+ years of experience, brought valuable strategies and examples from her six-week program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Participants left inspired and equipped with fresh approaches to enhance their teaching practices.
- **Bari Hochwald Cagnola, Fulbright scholar — Art for Social Renewal Project in Bratislava (May 5, 2024).** ED Lýdia Tobiášová and Program officer Dáša Tako participated on the final event hosted by US Fulbright scholar Bari Hochwald Cagnola who led a meaningful *Art for Social Renewal* community workshop in Bratislava, in collaboration with students from VŠMU. This bilingual gathering brought together local residents and artists for a few hours of creativity, connection, and fun. The *Art for Social Renewal* project, developed as part of Bari's Fulbright work, aimed to strengthen communities through art, and provided a space for neighbors to interact, create, and build friendships through various artistic activities. Attendees of all ages joined in the creative process, transforming their neighborhood and enjoying the chance to bring beauty, joy, and sense of community to their lives.
- **Peter Burzynski's poetry reading during the "Europe Day" (May 9, 2024)** an event organized by the Comenius University's Faculty of Arts, where Peter was invited to present his work. Some of his work was inspired by his stay in Slovakia and created during his Fulbright stay in Košice.

- **Promotion of the Fulbright Program and the Commission's outreach activities**

The core outreach and recruitment activities to attract prospective candidates of Fulbright awards rely mainly on virtual ads and visits to universities outside of the capital, reaching out to audiences with different backgrounds, re-connecting with alumni from different parts of the country and promoting Fulbright opportunities for individuals, as well as institutions.

Social media – Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Youtube– are crucial in communication with the interested audience. They are used to reach out to broaden the audience, raise awareness of the Commission's programs and activities, Fulbright grantees/alumni and their impact, and the overall prestige of the Fulbright program. However, the Commission's webpage remains the primary resource and administrative tool for information and guidance on the Fulbright program's opportunities and other scholarships.

- **Fulbright Program Opportunities presentation on EUBA:** The Fulbright staff was invited, as during previous years, for annual Orientation Days for PhD students at Economic University in Bratislava, to inform about opportunities via Fulbright Program. Program Officer Dáša Tako Velichová attended the event on September 11, 2023.
- **Webinar for young researchers of Slovak Academy of Sciences (October 10, 2023),** ED Lýdia Tobiašová together with Program Officer Dáša Tako Velichová presented the Fulbright opportunities to researchers of SAS. The webinar was part of the SAS annual event organized for young researchers.
- **International Erasmus Day on Comenius University (October 19, 2023).** The Fulbright Commission staff was invited to promote the Fulbright opportunities to Comenius University's students during the International Erasmus Day held on October 19, 2023. Program Officer Dáša Tako Velichová attended the event and talked to interested students.
- **Žijem vedu naživo (I live Science).** The FC staff was invited to participate at the annual conference "Žijem vedu naživo" that was held on December 21, 2023. The Fulbright Program and its opportunities for Slovak scientists were presented during individual meetings as well as a panel discussion. Mária Havelková, Slovak Scholar alumna, presented her Fulbright experience during the panel discussion as well.
- **Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice (May 15, 2024):** Silvia Miadoková presented Fulbright opportunities for doctoral students in Košice as well as Fulbright Schuman Program. After the presentation, Silvia attended a poetry reading delivered by US Scholar Peter Burzynski at the Department of British and American Studies at UPJŠ in Košice.
- **NAFA visit in Bratislava (May 20, 2024):** The group of 20+ members of the National Association of Fellowship Advisors from the United States visited Bratislava. NAFA is a professional organization composed of individuals engaged in the practice of advising college and university students who apply for competitive scholarships and fellowships, institutions of higher education that promote and celebrate the process of applying for competitive scholarships and fellowships as an educational enterprise, and foundations and organizations that administer competitive scholarship and fellowship programs. ED Lýdia Tobiašová organized the meeting with NAFA representatives in collaboration with the Comenius University in Bratislava. The meeting focused on the promotion of Slovak HEIs for NAFA representatives. Except for Fulbright

Commission, a representative from SAIA and 3 universities located in Bratislava (UK, STU, EUBA) gave presentations on the study and research opportunities for US citizens.

In the academic year 2023-24, the Commission and the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava continued to cooperate closely in a series of events organized either by the Commission or the U.S. Embassy:

- Program Officer Silvia Miadoková along with 2 ETAs, Sianna Serio and Sadie Pichelmann attended the [Opening of the American Center in Žilina](#) on October 10, 2023.
- [American Days - On October 11 and 12, 2023](#) Program Officer Silvia Miadoková conducted outreach activities for Fulbright Programs in Martin and Žilina and provided students with basic information on studying in the US representing EducationUSA advising center. Sianna Serio and Dylan Brown supported the outreach activities.
- [Meeting with American Spaces Coordinators](#) on April 18, 2024 - the Commission met with American Spaces Slovakia coordinators during their annual training hosted by the U.S. Embassy in Bratislava.
- [ELT MeetUp](#) - Program Coordinator Silvia Miadoková presented Fulbright opportunities for English high school teachers at the ELT meetups hosted by American Spaces in Košice (May 14, 2024). Besides regional English teachers, the events were attended by ETAs and their mentors, who shared their personal experience hosting teaching assistants at their high schools.

[The Handbook for U.S. Grantees and the Handbook for Slovak Grantees and the Emergency Plan](#)

The handbooks and other materials for grantees are being updated each academic year. The Commission provides grantees in all programs with useful hints and guidelines on the specific requirements of each program and information of all aspects of their stay in Slovakia.

G. ADMINISTRATION/STAFF AND FUNDING

1. The Commission and the Commission's Staff

Located in the center of Bratislava, the Commission's office is easily accessible via public transportation. The Slovak Ministry of Education, Research and Sports covers expenses for space, utilities, telephone, security, and internet connection.

Active co-operation with representatives of respective governments, partner agencies and Fulbright Commissions especially in Europe have become essential for maintaining the quality of operations and administration.

The knowledge and application of Slovak, European and U.S. laws is crucial for successful administration of the Fulbright Program.

The Commission staff participate in various activities, such as professional training, seminars and conferences which focus on issues of domestic and international higher education, education at all educational levels, international policy, civil society, non-profit activities, and marketing activities.

Ms. Silvia Miadoková joined the Commission Staff as a Program Officer for ETA Program, U.S. Student Program, Slovak Student Program and Hubert H. Humphrey Program on August 1st, 2023.

The Commission's webpage domain and hosting were transferred from Slovak Academy of Sciences registration to Websupport registration on September 24, 2023.

2. Staff Training/International Travel

- **"Digital university"**: Program officer, Dáša Tako Velichová successfully completed a year-long training "Digitálna univerzita" on August 27, 2023. The training was focused on different aspects of digital presence, including SEO, webpage, design, social media, content marketing, email marketing, brand and identity.
- **Staff Training in Sofia, Bulgaria (March 13-16, 2024)**. Program coordinators Dáša Tako Velichová and Silvia Miadoková attended the first European Staff Training in Sofia, hosted by the Bulgarian Fulbright Commission and funded by the ECA. The event brought together Fulbright staff from across Europe, along with representatives from the U.S. Department of State and the IIE. Dáša and Silvia exchanged insights with their European colleagues, expanded their professional networks, and explored best practices for application selection. Highlights included meeting with the country officer Mr. Scott Righetti, presentations on new Monthly Maintenance Rates (MMRs) by Roxanna Kobziar and Scott Righetti, and the opportunity to connect with Fulbright program officers and staffers from other European Commissions. Dáša also participated as a panelist, sharing insights on selection procedures.

- **Annual ED Meeting in Madrid, Spain (April 16 to 19, 2024).** ED Lýdia Tobiášová participated in an annual regional meeting of European Commission's directors hosted by Fulbright Spain. The annual meeting is an invaluable resource for Commission's work and serves as a platform for discussion on current issues within the Fulbright program and sharing best practices among Commissions. Except for European EDs, the ECA representative traditionally participates at the meeting and shares ECA perspectives on the implementation of new or/and updated Fulbright policies. This year's topics also included discussion on new MMRs and impact of the AI on the Fulbright program, such as application and selection process which is becoming a challenge the Commissions will have to address in a near future.
- **NAFSA Conference in New Orleans, USA (26 to 31 May, 2024).** ED Lýdia Tobiášová and Program Officer Dáša Tako Velichová attended the annual NAFSA Conference in New Orleans which is the largest educational fair in the North America. The annual conference offers a great opportunity to network with colleagues from around the world, such as Commissions Staff from all world regions, IIE, and ECA, and the opportunity to promote international education, the Fulbright Program, and to advocate for Slovak universities abroad. As part of the conference, the partner agency IIE (Institute of International Education who administers the Fulbright Program) organized a 2-day Fulbright institutional training where the program officer Dáša Tako Velichová participated in the panel discussion on scholar opportunities for Fulbright Program Advisors and Fulbright Liasons. ED Lýdia Tobiášová travelled as a member a delegation of the Slovak Ministry of Education to Washington D.C. with a visit to the Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, where Minister of Education Mr. Tomáš Drucker discussed expanding Fulbright opportunities and other exchanges. Later on, the delegation from the Ministry of Education had insightful discussions with the U.S. Department of Education. The highlight of the trip was the visit to NASA HQ, where Slovak Minister signed the Artemis Accords, marking a significant milestone in the Slovak collaboration with NASA.

3. Funding

U.S. and Slovak contributions remain the main source of funding. In-kind contributions are provided through the administration of other programs and partnering with host universities and institutions.

The respective fiscal year of the Fulbright Commission is observed as set by U.S. (October 1 – September 30) and Slovak (January 1 – December 31) regulations. The financial income is composed of two sources of funding: allocation from the U.S. Government and allocation from the Slovak Government.

In-kind contributions to the Commission include tuition waivers, funds allocated to other programs through other U.S. or Slovak government activities, health insurance for the grantees, private in-kind sponsorship etc.

Annually, the Commission is subject to an independent audit of receipts and disbursements and on the internal control structure. The Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport also audits the expenses from the Slovak government contribution separately.

Review of Financial Funding Fiscal Year 2024

INCOME	USD
Government Funding	801 878
U. S. Government Funding	409 794
Slovak Partner Government Funding	392 084
Other Funding	49 900
Humphrey Global Policy Dialogue	34 900
U.S. Study Abroad Engagement Grant	15 000
In-Kind Contributions	89 808
Fulbright Specialist Program	50 000
US Embassy Contribution	2 000
Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship	37 808
SUSIs	-
Surplus Funds from Previous Years	419 911
TOTAL INCOME	1 361 497
EXPENSES	USD
Program Expenses	526 109
Non-Grant Program Expenses*	32 679
Administrative Expenses	234 123
TOTAL EXPENSES	792 911

*Grant Supporting Expenses cover:

- Information Programs for U.S. and Slovak Grantees
- Grant Supplement Expenses for U.S. and Slovak Grantees
- Educational Material
- Web Page and Social Media Management
- In-Country Travel
- Operation of the Advising Center

Costs for the Accident and Sickness Insurance for all grantees provided by the U.S. State Department are not included.

exchange rate 1 EUR = 1,1196 USD as of 30 September 2024