

Lieber, Julia

From: SCHOLARS
Subject: FW: Newsletter: How can you find a host for your Fulbright Scholar Award?

From: Julia Lieber - The Fulbright Scholar Program <scholars@iie.org>
Sent: Friday, June 6, 2025 1:39 PM
To: Lieber, Julia <scholars@iie.org>
Subject: How can you find a host for your Fulbright Scholar Award?



Fulbright Scholar This Month June 2025

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Nishi,

At our [Office Hours](#) and [country-specific events](#) this month, the number-one question we are hearing from applicants is: **"How can I find a host for my project?"**

The good news is that you have plenty of time to not only find a host institution for that great project you have in mind, but to get help in figuring out where to go among [our 383 awards for 2026-2027](#). Here are a few pointers to help you make connections that could lead to long-term, sustainable collaborations with colleagues abroad:

- **Choose an award with an institution name in the title.** You may have seen some awards with very specific institutions named in their title and found that daunting since you are not sure that is the best place for you to take your project. We would like to demystify this entirely: awards with institutions in the title demonstrate that the named institution is particularly eager to host a Fulbrighter and *they are*

expecting to hear from you. You can see on this example in Portugal that [the Award Requirements tab](#) has a direct email and phone number for someone at the host institution, located at the bottom of the page in the blue box. Almost all awards with named institutions will have a contact just like this one on the Award Requirements tab.

- **Contact Fulbright Scholar alums.** We list every alum of the Fulbright Scholar Program in [our Scholar Directory](#). We cannot share their emails directly for data privacy reasons, but you should feel free to look up alums and ask them to chat about their Fulbright experience... and see if they can pass on any contacts they may have made while abroad! You should also feel comfortable reaching across disciplinary and institutional lines. The Fulbright Scholar Program is not only looking for expert researchers, teachers, and professionals, but also people who are [adaptable, flexible, and culturally sensitive](#). This means there are thousands of *very friendly* people for you to contact, and we share the story of one particularly friendly alum, Nishi Rajakaruna, in the Editorial Feature below.
- **Contact Fulbright Commissions or U.S. Embassies.** Most of our awards also have a contact in-country who directly collaborates with Fulbright on the ground. For example: on this Award Requirements tab of an award to India, there is [a contact for the Senior Program Officer at Fulbright India at the very bottom](#), and similarly, in Bolivia, there is a contact for [staff at the U.S. Embassy in Bolivia](#) in the blue box at the end of the page. Almost every country has a point person listed in the same spot on their award, and where it is written that they are available to help you make connections, they *want* to hear from you so they can help!

This month's action:

- **Reach out as soon as you *think* you might want to apply to a Fulbright Scholar Award, and feel free to contact multiple possible hosts at once so you don't miss anyone over the summer months. We have [a sample email template you can use to help send these cold emails](#) to people who may someday be the warmest of collaborators.**

Sincerely,



Julia V. Lieber, Ph.D.

The Fulbright Scholar Program
Outreach and Recruitment Team

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Editorial Feature

A Master Class on Networking with Alumni Ambassador Nishanta "Nishi" Rajakaruna

"The future belongs to those who dare to step into discomfort and welcome the unknown — and those are the ones who become Fulbrighters."

- Nishi



Nishanta 'Nishi' Rajakaruna with Welwitschia mirabilis subspecies namibiana in the Namib Desert

When you call [Nishanta "Nishi" Rajakaruna](#) on the phone, his energy is infectious. You could easily forget you were speaking to a full professor at Cal Poly, and the only sign that you are speaking to someone in the hard sciences comes from the sunlit warmth of this botanist's personality. His energy is not just reserved for Fulbright Program staff but offered to anyone who wants to talk about Fulbright with him.

In the last year, Nishi has advised *eleven* Fulbright applicants, and the way he starts these advising conversations is also the way he recommends that applicants reach out to potential hosts abroad. "I ask them a bit about their personal and professional background and about their research and teaching interests. Then I ask them if there are people abroad whose work they've found interesting and how that work relates to their own." He reminds us, "As academics, we read literature, so we know where research is happening in our respective fields." There is nothing more flattering than reaching out to someone on the basis of their exciting work, proving that you have taken the time to already get to know them.

For his entire academic career, Nishi has followed the path of “where exciting botanical education and research is happening.” In the 1990s, Nishi came from his native Sri Lanka to pursue his undergraduate education in the United States at the College of the Atlantic. After graduate school at the University of British Columbia in Canada and postdoctoral research at Stanford University, he returned to his undergraduate institution for his first tenure-track job and happened to fall into the perfect environment to become a Fulbrighter. The College of the Atlantic is unique in that the institution does not have departments, and this organizational structure helped Nishi begin to break down his disciplinary and networking barriers. He shares, “When I decided to apply, I spoke to the two faculty members who had just received a Fulbright. One was a physicist, one was an anthropologist, and I was a botanist. They were completely outside of my field!” While Nishi could only talk to these colleagues about the application process and not about his specific project, the lessons he learned from these conversations were perhaps more valuable. He muses, “Some people are more open to feeling uncomfortable” talking across disciplinary lines, “and I think those are the Fulbrighters – people who like to be challenged, people who realize that a contradiction about the way they see the world is actually a moment of learning.”

Nishi encourages people to take what may seem to be an uncomfortable step of reaching across disciplinary lines to learn about Fulbright, but he also recommends doing things that are already comfortable. Though Nishi’s first Fulbright saw him return to his native Sri Lanka after he became a U.S. citizen, his second Fulbright to South Africa required more networking and, he quips, “It happened in a hotel!” During Nishi’s time as a graduate student at the University of British Columbia, his advisor offered him some soon-to-expire funding to go to an international conference. When Nishi’s abstract, based on his Master’s thesis, was accepted to the conference, he arrived at the conference hotel and shared a room with a South African graduate student. “We shared the same room for a week, and we started talking about mutual interests in addition to our research. Both of our home countries love cricket and rugby, and we bonded through the shared interest in sports” and stayed in touch. Through the network of this conference roommate, Nishi found himself in South Africa for his second Fulbright 23 years later, in the 2022-2023 academic year. The moral of this story, Nishi says, is “when you go to conference, don’t just hang out with your friends. Make new friends because you never know how connections you make in settings you wouldn’t even imagine possible play out and shape your life 20 years later.” You can use events you are already attending to form connections that last a lifetime.

To bring his themes full circle, Nishi’s best advice for writing an email to find a Fulbright host combines his strategies of daring for the uncomfortable and cultivating the comfortable. When Nishi writes a networking email, “The first thing I bring up is that ‘I just read your paper, and I’m really excited to see what you’ve done,’” starting with shared territory to break the ice. He encourages Fulbright Scholar applicants to remember that “We academics like when our work is being celebrated by someone.” He recommends leading with this sincere, academic connection: “Talk to them about the work they’re doing before you start talking about what you do.” From there, he recommends that applicants move to a video or phone call and “immediately connect [the host’s] research skills and experiences to what they’re doing and find ways to show that you would both benefit from working together on a particular project.”

He hits it right on the nose that this networking strategy, which applies well beyond Fulbright, also prepares applicants to successfully be selected for the Fulbright Scholar Program. “It’s hard for academics because we are trained to write these very rigorous, hypothesis-driven research proposals. But we must remember that Fulbright is not only about rigorous research and teaching...but also about cultural and educational exchange to foster a better world. I try to get people to think about the core value of Fulbright from the

very beginning” and let that guide their conversations, their application, and their grant project.

Fulbright Scholar applicants should feel empowered to embrace the unknown and, when taking that first step seems daunting, know that alums like Nishi and IIE staff are here to help with networking.

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Important Dates

July 24, 2025

Hidden Gems of the Fulbright Scholar Competition 2026-2027

[Register here!](#)

This is our blockbuster summer event that is the only time we can unveil "Hidden Gems" among our award offerings.

September 15, 2025

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Application Deadline, 5:00 PM EDT (UTC-4:00)

[3 months remaining to write your application](#)

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Events

This month, we would like to feature our country-specific office hours co-hosted with Fulbright Commission offices abroad. These are great opportunities for you to get face time with staff in potential host countries and find the best place for you to apply!

Monday, June 9

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Mexico

[Register here!](#)

Tuesday, June 10

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Indonesia

[Register here!](#)

Thursday, June 12

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Canada

[Register here!](#)

Thursday, June 13

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Brazil

[Register here!](#)

Monday, June 16

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Portugal

[Register here!](#)

Tuesday, June 17

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Colombia

[Register here!](#)

Wednesday, June 18

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Spain

[Register here!](#)

Thursday, June 19

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Austria

[Register here!](#)

Friday, June 20

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in France

[Register here!](#)

Thursday, June 23

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Italy

[Register here!](#)

Tuesday, June 24

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in the Czech Republic

[Register here!](#)

Thursday, June 26

Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in India

[Register here!](#)

Friday, June 27

An Office Hour for Fulbright U.S. Scholar Opportunities in Central America and the

Caribbean
[Register here!](#)

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