

Fullbrights Abroad



Passage to India

The Fulbright Scholars Program is the United States' flagship academic exchange endeavor. Since 1946, when it was founded by Arkansas senator William F. Fulbright, the program has funded more than 300,000 scholars and students on visits to foreign countries to do research and/or to teach. Coastal Carolina has had its fair share of Fulbright scholars over the years, including three professors who have just completed their travels. Their stories—told in their own words—exemplify the goals of the Fulbright program, as defined by its mission statement: “to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries.”



Coastal professor John Reilly (front and center) with the chemistry faculty of Rajasthan University in the courtyard of the guesthouse.

John Reilly, assistant professor of chemistry, was awarded a Fulbright-Nehru grant to teach in India during the 2009-2010 academic year. He taught physical chemistry, with the addition of an ethics and writing component, at the University of Rajasthan in Jaipur, India. The following account is taken from his journal/blog.



Tuesday, July 7, 2009 Jaipur, India

Guru Purnima

It's 7 p.m. and still 100 degrees. I am jet-lagged and on the verge of dehydration. We are sitting in the courtyard of the Rajasthan University guesthouse with my hosts Professor I.K. Sharma and Professor P.S. Verma. One of the waiters brings us water. It's not filtered so I don't drink it. Professor Verma orders chai—a traditional Indian beverage made of black tea, honey, spices and milk—for everyone.

This is the first time CCU's Department of Chemistry has had a Fulbright fellow, and this is my first time in India. A young man arrives, bends down and touches my hosts' knees and then their feet. He comes over to me and does the same. His name is Jitender, and he is my host's postdoctoral fellow. Today is Guru Purnima, the day to pay homage to your teacher. What he just did was a sign of respect for teachers. I take this as a good omen. The chai arrives piping hot. I raise my cup in the 100-degree heat, look at my hosts and say: "Here's to the Fulbright experience!"

Top: Pam Martin and her son William near Puyo, Ecuador;
Middle: Carol Osborne (center) with a group of English teachers
in Chongqing, China; Bottom: John Reilly at I-India boys' home
near Jaiper, India.



Chemistry students at the Center for Converging Technologies of Rajasthan University.

August 22, 2009

The first day of classes

As I walk into the classroom, 80 students stand at once and in clear, beautiful voices say: “Good morning, Sir.” I stop in my tracks and think: I could get used to this. I manage to make it through the attendance, although they laugh at my pronunciation of their names. I move on to my presentation about who I am and where I teach. This will be the first time most of these students have been taught a topic in English. I find myself speaking slowly and using concise sentences.

The students seem genuinely fascinated and ask many questions about me, the United States and Coastal Carolina University. I decide to turn the tables. I begin to ask them some questions about themselves. At first I get complete silence, but then Aishwarya raises her hand. In halting, but correct, English she answers my questions. After her, Palvinder answers, then Naveed, Ashish and Sunil. Slowly, we begin a relationship that will last at least six months—hopefully more.

September 29, 2009

An afternoon at I-India boys’ home

After looking into what type of volunteering I will be doing in India, I decide to work with I-India, a boys home near Jaipur. Professor Prabhakarbe Goswami and his wife Abha started I-India after they did a study of the street children of Jaipur and were overwhelmed by the number (they interviewed 1,000 in 1993). At first they didn’t get aid from India or Unicef (which funded the study) so Abha started the mobile school using a bicycle riskshaw. She got local shops to donate books and supplies and she cooked meals out of her home. It

has grown from those humble beginnings to be funded by the governments of India, the Netherlands and Finland.

I watch the boys making picture frames. I find myself with Dharpal, Alam and one of the older, new boys, Suno. I cut Alam’s window out of his frame. He is too young to be handling scissors.

Suno, Dharpal and I are talking. Suno comes from a village near Bikaner. Dharpal tells me he doesn’t speak Hindi or English, only Rajasthani. Suno is 17, and I am not sure how he got to be at i-india. He seems lost in so many ways. Innocently, I ask Dharpal if he is also from Bikaner. He says no, he doesn’t know where he is from. He tells me that he has been at i-inida since he was three years old. He is 13 now. I look at Dharpal and think—10 years! He is very reserved and doesn’t participate in group games. He would rather read a book or play Concentration with another boy. He always seeks me out to sit quietly and look at picture

John Reilly (front row) with students and faculty of the chemistry department of Amravati University. All the first year graduate students dressed in pink in honor of Reilly’s visit.



books or to talk. As soon as the other boys migrate over to us, he quietly slips away. Today, he specifically asks me if I will be at I-India next week. He walks me out to the gate. My gut tells me he wants to go with me. My gut tells me: I could become his father.

October 23, 2009

Dressed in Pink

Dilip, my driver, and I have been driving for almost seven hours now. The countryside of Maharashtra is spectacular—rolling hills, buttes and lots of farms. We arrive in the small city of Amravati. The campus of Amravati University is serene. Monkeys abound in the trees that line the campus roads. We have been on the road for five days now crossing the state of Maharashtra from Mumbai to Nagpur. Amravati University is our next to last stop. After settling into the guesthouse, I take a walk around campus. I manage to find a poster session going on in the zoology department. The students and faculty are shocked to see me. I tell the faculty who I am and, of course, I am invited to stay for a cup of chai.

Professor Aswar, my host, and I have dinner at the guesthouse. He tells me how excited the faculty and students are that I am visiting. I am the first foreigner to visit the school and give lectures. The week has been long, and I am tired, but I feel very proud at that moment to be a Fulbright-Nehru Fellow.

The next morning I arrive at the chemistry building. In the lobby is an incredible sand painting of the periodic table. Of all the universities that I have visited and all the paintings made in the honor of my visits, this one is the best.

Professor Aswar takes me for a tour of the department. Afterwards we go to his office for some chai and to meet the other faculty members before my presentations. Professor Aswar then takes me to the seminar room and as we enter, all the students stand and greet us with “Good Morning, Sir.” I am struck by the fact the students are all dressed in pink. Students clamor around me and start asking all sorts of questions about the United States, South Carolina and Coastal Carolina University. In turn, I ask them if the pink is the school’s uniform. “No,” they reply. “We did this in honor of your visit. You are the first foreigner to visit us, and we wanted to make it special for you.” My heart swelled, and I say to them “That is the nicest thing students have ever done for me.”

The differences within the social classes of India become evident to Reilly during his many strolls down the streets of Amravati.

Word must have gotten out that I was in town because Professor Aswar asks me if I wouldn’t mind visiting two other colleges in town. Later that afternoon, I found myself at Amravati Engineering College and also Amravati College, where the current president of India used to be the president.

The magnitude of the Fulbright program hits me. The aspect of being a cultural ambassador becomes clear. A professor from a small, liberal arts college having a cup of chai with a fellow professor from a small, rural college seems like such a small gesture but, when they are from different cultures and countries, it speaks volumes about the program.

Sunday, November 1, 2009

The Morning Walk

It’s getting cool now, and the mornings are a great time to get exercise. I start my walk to City Park around 7:30 a.m. The guard of our flat is already up and has washed some of the tenants’ cars. I make a left at the corner and walk past a batch of tuk-tuk drivers, then past a group of beggars, both adults and children. The children beg for 10 rupees and try to grab my bottle of juice.



I continue on Tonk Road until it takes me to the Polo fields. At the side gate to the Polo fields are usually two guards. We greet each other every morning. I bought them running shorts and T-shirts when they asked me a few weeks back. Last week the tall, skinny guard handed me a note asking for jackets, short pants and a pair of shoes, size 9. Neither one is there. I wonder if they will return.

I enter the gates to the Polo field, and I make it around the track and head out back toward Tonk Road. I come to the intersection with the statue of the parade of Maharaja. The guard there greets me with “Namaste”—“I celebrate the divine spirit in you.” I cross Tonk road, and the beggar woman with a child who works the corner every day is there to ask me for money. She shows me the child and then points to her mouth. I tell her “Cul Malengi”—“I will see you tomorrow.”

The monkeys of the neighborhood are hanging out on a stone wall near someone’s residence. He is trying to get them to go but they don’t want to move. I pass the food stand that has its breakfast special out, and people are buying small plates. I haven’t the nerve to try it, but it sure smells good. I see a beggar boy at the fruit and vegetable stand I go to. He is staring at the food. He spots me and starts begging. He is alone today and looks hungry. I regret that I don’t have any money with me. I would have taken him back to the food stand for the breakfast special. Another boy dressed in nice clothes and shoes carrying a school bag walked right by us. The contrast was striking. India can be tough sometimes.



Prabhakar and Abha Goswami, founders of I-India boys' home.

December 24, 2009

Christmas Eve at I-India

This is our second visit to the boys’ home. It is Christmas Eve. The Christmas cake is brought out and I am asked to cut it. Slices go fast as this is a rare treat for the boys. Samosas, chips and soft drinks are added to the mix. The boys decide to kick the party up a notch by playing some Bangla (Punjabi dance) music. Within minutes everyone is dancing, the music is infectious. During the course of the evening I get a chance to sit with Dr. Goswami. I thank him for the opportunity to work with the boys and for his guidance with my teaching at Rajasthan University.

Saving Paradise, Saving our Planet: Ecuador’s Solution to Global Climate Change

Pamela Martin, associate professor of politics, was awarded a Fulbright Scholar grant to do research at the University of San Francisco in Quito, Ecuador, from January 2009 to January 2010. She conducted research on global and local dimensions of energy policy and conservation in the Amazon.



*W*hy would a poor country that depends on oil extraction decide to leave its largest oil reserve underground? When I began studying the Yasuní-ITT (Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini) Initiative in Ecuador, it was this question that primarily intrigued me. However, as I delved into the details of the international campaign to leave nearly 900 million barrels of oil underground in pristine Amazonian Yasuní National Park, I soon discovered that protecting biodiversity in this UNESCO Man and Biosphere Reserve was only one reason to save this block of land.



Ecuador's Yasuni National Park

Yasuni National Park is also home to two, possibly three, groups of uncontacted indigenous peoples: the Tagaeri, the Taromenane and the Oñamanene. In lieu of extracting oil, Ecuador proposes to leave it underground in return for 50 percent of its value, approximately \$350 million per year for 13 years. The funding will be spent on improving the living conditions in the Amazon, protecting other national park sites (making it the country with the largest percentage of protected areas in the world), and creating new, alternative energy sources for the country.

Yet the importance of the Yasuni-ITT Initiative goes far beyond its Ecuadorian borders. It is creating new solutions for climate change beyond the Kyoto Protocol. As the United States, China, and other industrialized and emerging market nations struggle to decide how to adapt to our grim climate realities, smaller, lesser developed nations will be taking the brunt of the impact if nothing is done. Some scientists are predicting that the Amazon, the earth's lungs, could turn into dry savannah during this century. Approximately 17 percent of the Amazon Basin has been deforested as illegal logging and new road construction for oil blocks continues. This is threatening, not just to Amazonian countries and Ecuador, but to the entire planet as the rainforest is one of our largest, natural carbon sinks—one mechanism to cool the Earth.

Countries like Ecuador, poor in economic capital yet wealthy in terms of extreme biodiversity and natural resources are not waiting for the world's leading nations to develop a climate change strategy that works for them. At the December 2009 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—the world's forum for creating new climate change agreements—and at other international venues including the European Union and OPEC, Ecuador is presenting its innovative plan to protect the rainforest and leave oil underground by selling the emissions that would be avoided by not extracting and burning this fossil fuel. Rather than purchasing a barrel of oil, you purchase avoided carbon emissions through Yasuni Certificate Guarantees (YCG). Ecuadorian officials estimate that 407 million metric tons of carbon dioxide will not be emitted by keeping oil underground in the ITT block. In market values, this equates to about \$7 billion dollars. This pilot plan differs from the Kyoto Protocol because it emphasizes avoided emissions, rather than emissions mitigation or adaptation, and calls on the world community to value human life and biodiversity. To collect the funds for the proposal, Ecuador is seeking international donations from other nations, international organizations and individuals.

My Fulbright research grant funded the study of the national governmental and international organizational political networks surrounding the Yasuni-ITT proposal. La Universidad San Francisco de Quito (USFQ), one of our CCU partner institutions for study abroad, was my host institution. I lived in Ecuador with my family for four months while researching this proposal on the ground, including interviews, governmental and non-governmental meetings, and travel to the rainforest.



Pipelines run through the lush green forests of Ecuador, leaving random oil spills along their path.

While I have been studying Ecuador for about 13 years, my true inspiration for this work comes from a CCU grant-funded research trip I took to the northern Amazon, on the Colombian border, in 2006 to observe an international conference on “Oil and Human Rights.” During that conference, we took a “toxi-tour” of oil spills in lush green forests and pipelines that hung above homes. Seeing the seething flashes of fire above the oil pits was depressing, but nothing compared to the comments by local people who have suffered through oil development since its inception in 1973. One mother showed us her sick son, suffering from cancer—a disease that has ravaged many towns exposed to petroleum production. In fact, the Northern Ecuadorian Amazon

has been rated as having one of the highest cancer rates in Latin America.

The experiences in Ecuador have reminded me of just how interconnected we all are on the planet. As they fight to preserve their pristine forests, we are searching for ways to save our coastline. Global climate change affects us all—rich and poor, North and South. The Fulbright award has given me the opportunity to write a book on this topic and to create a new course on global environmental politics. Most importantly, it has inspired me to work with CCU students to encourage a new generation of global thinkers on the biggest crisis our planet faces: our survival.

Lessons from the Orient

Cultural Studies Abroad

Carol Osborne, professor of English, was selected to participate in the Fulbright-Hays Seminars Abroad program in China last summer. She is using her improved understanding and knowledge of Chinese culture to enhance the curriculum of CCU’s world literature course and to develop a new upper level course on Chinese literature and culture.



In July 2009, I traveled with 16 other professors to the People’s Republic of China as part of the 2009 Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad. Each day, we were treated to lectures from experts in all fields of study, from social workers and art critics to judges and economists. Each day, we explored the cultural landmarks and historic sites in the cities we visited: Beijing, Xi’an, Chongqing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. While the Great Wall, Emperor Qin Shihuang’s Terracotta Warriors, the Pearl Tower, and the old longtangs beside the newly constructed skyscrapers were all awe-inspiring, and while the markets, restaurants, teahouses and acrobatic shows were all delightful, what made the greatest impression on me from my month abroad were the people of China.

In every location we visited, we were greeted with a warm welcome and a sincere desire on the part of our Chinese hosts to learn from us as well as to assist us in becoming more familiar with the 5,000-year history and fascinating culture of their country. In the formal welcoming speeches, the customary exchange of business cards, and the ritual gift-giving, the Confucian concepts of *Li*, *Ren* and *Shu* (propriety, benevolence and reciprocity) were always evident.

Mr. Zhai, a middle-school teacher who served as our guide on the mainland, was the epitome of what I now think of as the spirit of China. His good nature, humor and attentiveness knew no bounds. When we

Students at the Gallop School in Xi’an



met, he presented each of us a ceramic tricolored horse, a representative souvenir from his hometown. At the farewell banquet, as if he had not already done enough to ensure we all had the trip of a lifetime, he gave us CDs containing 3,500 pictures he had taken during our stay. I will never forget his delight in learning English idioms and the pleasure he took in sharing his knowledge and his country with us. It is truly amazing that after one month, we all felt as though we had formed a friendship that would last a lifetime.

The people of China view their country and their children with pride, and they are optimistic in the hope they hold for the future of both. When we visited the Xi'an Gallop International English School and the Shanghai School for the Deaf, for example, the young students were thrilled to share their culture, giving us demonstrations in calligraphy, poetry, dance and art. Wherever we were—in restaurants, town squares or museums—parents would encourage their children to talk with us in order to practice their English. When I visited with Wendy Luk's family, not only did her mother teach me how to make dumplings (a skill I am continuing to practice for friends here in South Carolina), but her father, an operatic singer, performed an Italian aria as Wendy accompanied him on the piano.

China is blossoming. The boom in the economy is evident from the building and development we saw in every city, and the people are enjoying more freedom and more opportunities for growth than ever before. With a strong work ethic, a dedication to learning, and an energy and excitement that is palpable, the people I met have a right to be enthusiastic about the future. Their prosperity did not seem threatening, though, as it may have seemed to me before my visit. In witnessing the desire for mutual understanding and peaceful relations on the part of the individuals I met, I also became optimistic about cooperation between our two countries. Since we share so many of the same challenges, from environmental concerns to care of the elderly, and the same desires for the security and well-being of our

Professor Craig Canning, our scholar-guide, and Lucy, star of the Gallop School in Xi'an



Students performing at the School for the Deaf in Shanghai

families, we stand to gain much from working closely with one another.

Fulbright-Hays participants are required to create a curriculum project and to conduct outreach activities upon their return to the United States. Before visiting China, my primary interest had been in the ancient literary texts, the writings of Confucius, Laozi and Zhaungzi, authors I had taught in my ENGL 205 course. After falling in love with the voices of contemporary China, though, I began reading the literature that has emerged during the last century, particularly in the years following Mao's death in 1976. Since then a gradual relaxation of government censorship and greater interaction with the outside world has led to increased access to the works of Chinese writers. I chose short stories from Kirk A. Denton's 2008 collection, *China: A Traveler's Literary Companion*, as the basis for my curriculum project.

In addition to reading and discussing these stories, my ENGL 102 classes began the semester conducting research on topics related to Chinese history and culture and then sharing their discoveries with one another. For my outreach activities, I am scheduled to give presentations at Unity Christ Church and the College English Association, and I hope to find an opportunity to share my experiences in the classrooms of China with students in the Spadoni College of Education. During my spring 2010 semester sabbatical, I have also been working on the curriculum for an upper-level English course in Chinese literature, spanning from the ancient Daoist and Confucian texts to the works being published today. □