

Focus on Administration

**Fulbright Program
Summer Training Initiative**

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Anyone who has been associated with American higher education in the past decade knows all too well about fiscal cuts and program reductions and eliminations. In New York state, both the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY) sustained rather dramatic budget reductions in the early 1990s. Former SUNY chancellor, D. Bruce Johnstone, in 1992 remarked to a legislative hearing:

I am not asking that New York spend what other states spend on their public universities....I am asking you not to test the limits of how little a public system of higher education can cost, lest New York State, like some other nearby states, discovers the answer and does not like it, but can no longer turn around the decline of its once proud state university...I ask, in short, to carry less of the burden of cuts...far **less disinvestment**.
(Legislative Hearing, February 4, 1992.)

Such public institution reductions were a direct consequence of the national recession following the Gulf War, but they were also an indication that higher education, because of other pressing social and economic needs, was no longer a top funding priority for shrinking public resources.

Now, even though most economists agree that the recovery is well

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underway, the November 1994 election brought about a new, leaner philosophy of government. With the introduction of the Republican "Contract for America," a promise of a less-intrusive government and tax relief for overburdened citizens and corporations both at the National and state levels, institutions of higher education once again are facing potentially serious cuts.

In New York state, newly elected Republican Governor George Pataki released his first executive budget proposal on February 1, 1995. This budget proposal called for massive reductions in state government in New York. The state-operated budgets of both SUNY and CUNY have been slashed by 31.5 percent and 25.5 percent respectively. A key point of contention in the 1995 executive budget proposal in New York was a call for both public systems of higher education to raise tuition substantially. At present in SUNY, the undergraduate in-state tuition charge for all state operated campuses is \$2,650. The Governor's proposal calls for an increase of \$1,000-\$1,900 by September. It is conceivable that the four university centers in SUNY will be forced to charge differentially higher tuition than that assessed at the comprehensive state colleges in the system for the first time. This issue, alone, has been a major source of discontent among the higher education community in New York for quite some time. Moreover, the Governor's budget proposal calls for a substantial reduction in the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) in New York, the largest such state-sponsored student aid program in the nation, and the elimination of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) for economically disadvantaged students who need special mentoring and funding in order to attend college. The New York State example is certainly not the only one of reductions in state tax support for higher education this year.

On the other side of the ledger, SUNY and CUNY have been asked to become more productive—not a new phrase, of course, but clearly one with a renewed sense of urgency. One principal way that the academy can become more productive is to employ more imaginative uses to the annual calendar—especially the summer, where historically our American colleges and universities are under-utilized, and enrollments in traditional courses, when they are even available, are not consistently strong.

Two colleagues and I have been doing just that for the past three summers. We have been involved in an intensive five-to-six-week professional training program for Egyptian university deans and professors of English as a foreign language in conjunction with the Fulbright Binational Commission and USAID. The Fulbright program is an important educational and cultural developmental program in

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attempting to impart effective administrative skills and more modern English language pedagogical ideas in a critical Middle Eastern national university system. It has also been a rather lucrative use of faculty, graduate students, and facilities during traditionally slower summer months and allows for some significant new flexibility in resources for all departmental faculty in part as a consequence of the indirect cost recovery from the grant.

When the Binational Fulbright Commission issued a Request For Proposals (RFP) in December 1991, I had been a full-time faculty member in our Higher Education Administration graduate program for less than one semester, having served as Assistant and Associate Dean of the Graduate School at the University at Buffalo for more than 11 years. My chairman and I believed that with the assistance of a third colleague, we could respond effectively to the RFP. I was personally apprehensive since I had never written a research proposal such as this before, even though I had assisted dozens of faculty write research proposals.

The original RFP sought to enhance the performance of the participants from selected Egyptian universities in educational administration, human resource management, and curriculum and materials design. Specifically the request was seeking professional enrichment to occur on four levels.

1. Deans will take a course (or courses) which focus on administrative issues such as educational leadership, organizational structure and behavior, strategies for increasing educational and human resource management.
2. Heads of departments will take a course on curriculum and materials design and the management of teacher training. Both groups will take a course, possibly structured.
3. Both groups will take a course, possibly structured, as a series of colloquia/seminars/workshops, on management concepts such as team building, employee empowerment, strategies for increasing organizational effectiveness, and ways to promote English language learning at their faculties. Both groups will do field observations of , and if possible “counterpart” with, administrators and faculty members from the host institution, or with administrators and faculty members from other educational institutions in the same area. (From Fulbright RFP, December, 1991, p. 2)

Our proposal was developed to include mini courses by our regular departmental faculty who received stipends for their work—coopera-

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tive “shadowing” experiences for the participants with deans from our university and faculty/professional staff from our Intensive English Language Institute (IELI)—and the participants were to focus all of their learning activities on developing a plan for implementing changes in English language curriculum development and execution at their own university.

Each summer there is also a comprehensive cultural component, including a day-long visit to the Chautauqua Institution for lectures and seminars, a chance to share dinner and discussion with local Western New York families hosted through the Council for International Visitors, evenings with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, and local plays and other theater productions, not available to the participants in Egypt. Also, we have planned several outings to local attractions such as Niagara Falls and of course, shopping at the outlet malls. In short, this is a comprehensive seven-day program for the time that the Fulbright participants are in Buffalo.

Between the first and second years of our summer grant, the three principals traveled to Egypt for three weeks as consultants to visit several Egyptian universities, had meetings with members of the Egyptian Supreme Council of Universities, developed a workshop for younger faculty, and presented scholarly papers at an international education conference held at Assiut University in upper Egypt. The visit to Egypt certainly assisted in my understanding and sensitivity to the rather extreme social and professional working conditions existing in the Egyptian universities, and to how important programs like ours are to plant the seeds of change in an otherwise oppressive atmosphere.

To date, more than 60 Egyptian deans and heads of academic departments have participated in the intensive Fulbright summer training programs. Ten more participants will be attending during the summer of 1995. The Buffalo program has become well known in influential government and higher educational circles in Cairo as a solid and provocative program. It also presents the notion clearly in a highly centralized national higher education system that not all university campuses must engage in exactly the same programs. In short, it has fostered a modest sense of autonomy and individuality among Egyptian universities.

We are currently waiting for a response regarding another summer Fulbright training program which will host senior administrators of Egyptian universities.

I believe that programs such as ours are both important and innovative uses of the summer calendar. Faculty and graduate students both benefit from the experience and income, and importantly the

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Fulbright grant has afforded us some modest increase in faculty resources during the academic year at a time when colleagues in other departments have had reductions in travel and other professional development funds.

A unique highlight of our program has been the professional “shadowing” experiences that the participants have had with counterparts here. The hands-on experiences of attending dean’s staff meetings, working on budgets, handling personnel matters, etc., have all been extremely helpful in bringing practical applications to the administrative and management theories discussed in the classroom.

The Fulbright experience has enriched my teaching enormously by enabling me to bring comparative aspects of higher education and cross cultural experiences to my own classroom. I have gained invaluable knowledge which I would never have gained otherwise, and these insights have been passed on to my own graduate students. All of us work increasingly more in a world where we need to appreciate the social mores of diverse cultures and interact effectively.

The entire summer grant experience has been extremely positive, and I will certainly seek other opportunities to do similar programs in the future. As American colleges and universities are increasingly pressed for funds, small programs such as this can have a significant impact on academic programs.

Addendum

The Fulbright Commission has many grant opportunities available for faculty each year. Most of the Fulbright activity is centered around scholarly exchange programs throughout the world. Generally the Commission will determine annual areas of special need and highlight those in their competition.

Training grants, such as ours, generally come about through a more specialized process, with a Request for Proposals submitted directly by the Fulbright Commission to around 30-50 institutions maintaining specific needed programs. In our case, the Request for Proposals was sent to universities maintaining comprehensive graduate schools of education and Intensive English language programs.

Lastly, USAID maintains many grant programs for international projects, particularly in developing nations throughout the world. Training grants may be secured in this fashion.