

Fulbright Program Adviser Report To Faculty Meeting 11-04-05

I would like to encourage faculty to play a more active role in identifying and advising those students who might be strong candidates to apply for a Fulbright grant or another external grant, such as those administered by Barbara Opitz in the Dean of Student Affairs Office.

For the past three years I've been the Fulbright Program Adviser. I inherited this position from Barbara Black who inherited it from Bill Fox. The job of the Fulbright program adviser is to guide students through the process of applying for a Fulbright grant to study or conduct research for one year overseas. Students typically apply in the fall of their senior year or in the year or two after graduation.

Created by the US Congress in 1946 to promote mutual understanding between nations, Fulbright awards approximately 1,200 grants to students from all over the United States. The competition for these grants, as you can imagine, is intense. Some big universities have full-time Fulbright advisers who target certain students from the day they arrive on campus to when they apply in their senior year. Columbia last year had 92 applicants and 31 awards. Berkeley had 85 applicants and 26 awards.

If we look at schools that more closely resemble Skidmore the numbers go down but are still impressive. Middlebury had 12 applicants and rec'd 5. Vassar had 15 and rec'd 5. Colgate had 28 applicants and rec'd 5. I don't know how many Pitzer students applied last year but they rec'd 9 Fulbrights – and boasted about it in a full page ad in the Chronicle of Higher Education recently.

In a typical year Skidmore will have 4 to 8 students apply and usually one student will be awarded a grant – some years we aren't awarded any Fulbrights. Although last year we had 5 students apply and received two.

I honestly believe that we can do much better than this. You can be a great help in several ways:

- 1) Identify students who show strong potential in their sophomore and junior years and encourage them to apply. Send Barbara or me their names and we'll write them with information.
- 2) Work closely with students on their applications. For an undergraduate the application process sometimes seems overwhelming and they often have little or no experience writing thoughtful and creative project proposals.
- 3) Offer to serve on the Skidmore Fulbright interview committee. Every Skidmore student who applies needs to be interviewed and I'm always looking for volunteers.