

THE

# News

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FULBRIGHT FINLAND

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Working  
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# Fostering Dialogue



The Fulbright Finland Foundation’s programs fulfil a number of complementary roles. Academic and professional exchanges build capacity, enable the flow of knowledge and ideas, and contribute to the internationalization of higher education and research. Simultaneously they are cultural and public diplomacy programs: awardees are citizen-diplomats, sharing their own diverse backgrounds and culture. Many of our programs are also characterized by science diplomacy or knowledge diplomacy, with a distinct focus on helping solve global challenges.

The Foundation’s new, ambitious strategic grants — the *Seeking Solutions for Global Challenges Awards* (p. 4) — are broadly aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with priority areas including global health, climate change, and human rights, to name just a few. From among these themes, in this magazine issue we focus on inclusive societies, fostering dialogue, and peace and conflict resolution.

In her thought-provoking piece titled *Can a Fulbrighter Fail?*, **Kirsi Cheas** discusses the importance of open dialogue, peer support, and accepting failure as parts of the process of solving complex challenges (more on the blog series on p. 21).

Peace mediation professional **Johanna Poutanen** (p. 12) talks about her experiences with peace processes around the world, the ongoing impacts of her Fulbright award in her work, and the crucial importance of women’s participation in conflict prevention and resolution.

As our visiting columnist, we are honored to have Ambassador **Teemu Turunen**, who leads the new Center for Mediation under the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs (p. 3). He discusses the importance of interaction and collaboration in mediation across state and organizational lines, and how agile, multitrack coalitions create better opportunities for more effective peacemaking. Quite rightly, he also reminds us that the global Fulbright Program, celebrating its 75th Anniversary in 2021, was founded as a peace program.

As we get ready to welcome the year 2021, I want to extend our sincere thank you to everyone in our community for the work you do and for your continuing efforts to foster inclusive dialogue.

**Terhi Mölsä**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Fulbright Finland Foundation

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Cover photo: Saila Huusko

# Finland, Conflicts, and Peace Mediation

We need to support the creation of the new generation of mediators. Education is a powerful tool.

Finland is well known for its rich history in conflict resolution. The best known example is President **Martti Ahtisaari** and his lasting legacy in peacemaking, awarded with a Nobel peace prize in 2008. Many Finns have been working for peaceful resolution of conflicts during the past decades, from Northern Ireland to Bosnia and from Myanmar to the Horn of Africa. Some still remember the “Spirit of Helsinki” from 1975 as a synonym for rapprochement between the states in the East and the West.

Peace mediation is a foreign policy priority for Finland. Our government has been supporting peace mediation, especially by defending the role of mediation in international forums as a cost-effective way to resolve destructive conflicts. In 2020, it was the right time to put even more emphasis on conflict prevention and actual peace mediation. With conflict resolution as my passion, it is my dream job to now be leading the Ministry’s newly founded Center for Mediation! It has been a busy fall for me and my colleagues, setting up structures and mechanisms to ensure an efficient coordination and handling of peacemaking opportunities. This work will continue.

The world has not turned out as stable and peaceful as expected. The triumphal march of the liberal democracy and respect for the international law has turned into uphill battle. Some regional powers have seen their chance to try to change the current status quo. Contemporary conflicts have become more complex, typically intra-state and inter-group, but at the same time internationalized. Add technological revolution, disinformation, and hybrid attacks, and the result is a fragmented reality. The pandemic has added a new, though temporary layer of complexity to the picture.

While recognizing a remarkable change in the nature of conflicts, it is important not to lose sight of a bigger picture. The number of persons deceased in wars and conflicts has been clearly and constantly decreasing since the end of the cold war. In the long run, the world is getting better, not worse. There are reasons to stay optimistic.

**FINLAND IS IN A GOOD POSITION** to develop peacemaking in contemporary conflicts. Building on our national strengths and collaborative model, the participation of Finland in peace processes is hardly considered a threat to anyone. Rather the opposite, an honest broker without an agenda of its own. A Nordic welfare state, a rare example of how to turn a poor and remote country into a well functioning society in 100 years.

The Finnish model of peacemaking is one of collaboration. The parties to a conflict have to be – always – at the center of peacemaking efforts. Too often wanna-be facilitators and mediators are looking for their own short-term interest and flashlights, instead of supporting the parties in their efforts for building a lasting peace. Secondly, state actors should work closely together with non-state actors and complement each other. The interaction between different tracks and cooperation over organizations and state boundaries will become even more important. Agile multitrack coalitions create better opportunities for more effective peacemaking.

**THE WORLD TODAY NEEDS MORE PEACE-BUILDERS**, in all levels of societies. Building peace is a long-term commitment, and we need to support the creation of the new generation of mediators. Education is a powerful tool to change hearts and minds and, as Senator **J. William Fulbright** put it, to “bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship.”

Finland remains happy and willing to assist the parties to a conflict by bringing them together, by good offices, or by facilitating dialogue. It is also in our own interest to do so. The less wars and armed conflicts there are in the world, the better it is for all of us. Finland absolutely benefits from a more predictable world, based on clear, common rules.



**Teemu Turunen**  
Director, Ambassador  
Center for Mediation,  
Ministry for Foreign  
Affairs of Finland

# Seeking Solutions for Global Challenges Award for Finnish Professionals and Researchers



The Fulbright Finland Foundation is pleased to announce its new strategic grant to Finnish professionals and postdoctoral researchers to work on projects focusing on topics of current and global importance.

The new program is open for Finnish professionals and postdoctoral researchers who want to impact the future and make a difference, seeking solutions to global challenges through their research and professional projects. The award is available for any field for visits at any appropriate U.S. institution or organization. The project focus areas can include topics such as global health, climate change, human rights, peace mediation, Arctic cooperation, cybersecurity, or any other topic with global importance.

Application round for the new award for the academic year 2021–22 closed in December. The first selections will be published in March 2021.

The program was founded to mirror the Foundation's similar grant from the U.S. to Finland that was launched earlier in 2020. The first application round attracted remarkable attention among U.S. scholars. Seeking Solutions for Global Challenges was one of the most viewed awards in the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Catalog listing 458 Fulbright awards around the world. Selections for next year are now being made.

Both of these new strategic awards were created to support the Foundation's motto *Together Shaping the Future* and its vision to *empower the minds that will find global solutions to tomorrow's challenges by fostering academic and professional expertise and excellence in leadership.*

Text: Emmi Jelekäinen

## The Seeking Solutions for Global Challenges Award

[www.fulbright.fi/grants-research-postdoc-and-scholar/seeking-solutions-global-challenges-award](http://www.fulbright.fi/grants-research-postdoc-and-scholar/seeking-solutions-global-challenges-award)

## Two Finnish Scholars Selected for the Fulbright Arctic Initiative

Eighteen scholars from the Arctic Council member countries were selected for the third cohort of the Fulbright Arctic Initiative to collaborate on multidisciplinary research focusing on Arctic nations' shared challenges and opportunities in three thematic areas: Arctic Infrastructure in a Changing Environment, Arctic Security and Cooperation, and Community Dimensions of Health.

The cohort includes two scholars from Finland: Associate Professor **Anu Soikkeli** from the University of Oulu for the Community Dimensions of Health group, and Research Professor **Rauna Kuokkanen** from the University of Lapland for the Arctic Security and Cooperation group.

The selected scholars represent a cross-section of disciplines, professional backgrounds, institutions, and experiences.

Over the 18-month program, the Fulbright Arctic scholars will address key research and policy questions related to fostering a secure and sustainable Arctic through individual research exchange visits, online collaborations, and a series of group seminars in Canada, Norway, and the U.S.

The initiative is sponsored by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and it supports interdisciplinary research for scholars from the eight Arctic Council member states: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and the United States.

Fulbright Arctic Initiative: [www.fulbright.fi/fin-fai](http://www.fulbright.fi/fin-fai)

Text: Emmi Jelekäinen



**Anu Soikkeli**  
University of Oulu



**Rauna Kuokkanen**  
University of Lapland

## Business and Economics: Hanken Partnership Renewed

During the 2020 International Education Week, the Fulbright Finland Foundation and Hanken School of Economics met for a unique virtual signing event to renew the Fulbright-Hanken Distinguished Chair in Business and Economics agreement. The agreement was changed from a three-year agreement to an agreement that is valid until further notice. COVID-19 may be altering daily lives, but it does not stop the Foundation and its partners from fostering international collaboration.

The Hanken School of Economics continues to be an exemplary partner as Fulbright grantees experience a warm welcome and are genuinely integrated

into the Hanken academic community. Since the partnership began in 2015, Hanken has hosted 13 Fulbright-Hanken Distinguished Chairs and expects to welcome three more arriving in March 2021.

**Karen Spens**, Rector of Hanken School of Economics explains: “We are proud and grateful that our collaboration continues. The Fulbright grantees at Hanken have been vital for the success of our research and truly inspirational for all of our faculty.”

[www.fulbright.fi/hanken-distinguished-chair](http://www.fulbright.fi/hanken-distinguished-chair)

Text: Leasa Weimer

### Celebrating Fulbright-Nokia

The year 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Nokia Foundation and the 20th anniversary of the collaboration between the Nokia Foundation and the Fulbright Finland Foundation.

The Fulbright-Nokia Distinguished Chair in Information and Communications Technologies program brings recognized scholars from the U.S. to Finland, and in 2020-21 the awardee is Professor **Paul Berger** from Ohio State University.

Watch Nokia Foundation's Anniversary Event at [nokiafoundation.com/news/2020-25th-anniversary](http://nokiafoundation.com/news/2020-25th-anniversary)

## Science, Technology, and Innovation: VTT Partnership Renewed

VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland and the Fulbright Finland Foundation have renewed their cooperation agreement for the Fulbright-VTT Award in Science, Technology and Innovation program.

The Foundation is pleased to have partnered with VTT since 2004, the cur-

rent grant program was founded in 2012 to bring U.S. scholars to Finland to collaborate on a broad range of current issues of science, technology, and innovations.

This year the program will bring Associate Professor **Philippe Amstislavski** from the University of Alaska Anchorage to Tampere to work with the biomaterials

group at VTT to research bio-based alternatives to plastic. The next application round for the program opens in February 2021.

[www.fulbright.fi/vtt-scholar](http://www.fulbright.fi/vtt-scholar)

Text: Emmi Jelekäinen

## Developing Diverse and Equal Schools New Partnership with Espoo, Liminka, Oulu, and EDUFI

The Fulbright Finland Foundation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the municipalities of Espoo, Liminka, and Oulu to initiate a partnership funding the 2020-22 cohort of the Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools (FLGS) Travel Grants program. On this round, the focus is on developing diverse, equal, and language aware schools from a leadership perspective for school leaders from the three participating municipalities.

The new partnership builds on the program launched in 2018 in collaboration with the U.S. State Department's Teacher

Exchange Branch. It supports a growing transatlantic alumni network of school leaders and future Finnish-U.S. collaboration between K-12 school leaders.

The program is supported through the 2020 Internationalization of Education Grants from the Finnish National Agency for Education.

**Paula Mattila**, Counsellor of Education at the Finnish National Agency for Education, thinks that opportunities and programs provided by the Fulbright Finland Foundation are a meaningful expansion of the Agency's international cooperation which largely focuses on Europe. “It

is important to increase transatlantic collaboration to exchange perspectives and ideas for developing education. The high quality offered by the Fulbright Finland Foundation, together with our long-term partnership, enables continuous collaborative development. We are excited to see what the FLGS Travel grantees bring, for example, to curriculum development,” she says.

[www.fulbright.fi/grants-professionals/fulbright-leaders-global-schools-travel-grant-program](http://www.fulbright.fi/grants-professionals/fulbright-leaders-global-schools-travel-grant-program)

Text: Mirka McIntire

# Planning the Future of International Education

Text LEASA WEIMER

“The pandemic has highlighted that we are permanently globally connected as a society. We have a collective responsibility to train globally competent and conscious students.”

– Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela

Watch the recording of the first webinar in the series at [www.fulbright.fi/about-us/events/thinking-and-planning-ahead-whats-next-international-education-and-study-abroad](http://www.fulbright.fi/about-us/events/thinking-and-planning-ahead-whats-next-international-education-and-study-abroad)

International higher education continues to be shaped by these extraordinary times. The pandemic has impacted international mobility, border restrictions, and face-to-face cultural exchange, but it has also resulted in creative online solutions and spotlighted the importance of global connection. As a way to bring the international higher education community together to reflect on the current challenges and discuss and plan for the ‘new normal’, a global webinar series was created: *Internationalization of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era*.

With a wealth of internationalization expertise, the Fulbright Finland Foundation received a Study Abroad Engagement Grant from USA Study Abroad branch within the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State to host the webinar series. Developed in joint collaboration with USA Study Abroad, and the Association of International Education Administrators (AIEA) the webinar series aims to raise awareness of the changing landscape of U.S. study abroad and international education and to pave the way for long-term collaboration between higher education institutions around the world with those in the U.S. to increase and diversify American study abroad, as well as faculty exchanges for research, lecturing, and partnership building.

In November, the Foundation’s CEO **Terhi Mölsä** kicked-off the global series by addressing the importance of international education and

the Foundation’s new strategic initiatives to work together with higher education and study abroad institutions in this new landscape. **Heidi Manley**, Chief of the USA Study Abroad, gave warm greetings and encouraged the global audience to tap into USA Study Abroad resources.

The first webinar, *Thinking and Planning Ahead: What’s Next for International Education and Study Abroad?* was moderated by the Foundation’s own resident scholar-practitioner in higher education internationalization, **Leasa Weimer**. Guest speakers **Robin Matross Helms**, **Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela**, and **Cheryl Matherly** urged the audience of over 300 participants to recognize the opportunities in this challenging moment, embrace the increased connectivity, and at the same time offered pragmatic ways to shape the future of study abroad and international higher education.

The discussion opened with Robin Matross Helms from the American Council on Education underlining the importance of international education: “We need to acknowledge that this is a hard moment, but our mission in this field is too important. We have to persevere.”

Cheryl Matherly from Lehigh University highlighted the need to rethink our approach to global learning: “We can no longer say that learning cannot happen virtually. We need to lean into it and use this as an opportunity to gain experience and acceptance of new models.”

A theme that surfaced throughout the webinar was the need to widen opportunities to gain global competencies and consciousness. At the end of the first webinar, Reitumetse Obakeng Mabokela from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign left participants with a call to action: “This moment in higher education history has highlighted the deep-seeded issues around equity, access, and social justice. We have a fundamental responsibility to address these issues at our institutions, nationally and internationally.”

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF  
**HIGHER EDUCATION**  
IN THE COVID-19 ERA

The series continues with monthly webinars exploring timely topics such as ‘Championing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in International Education,’ ‘The New Virtual Student Experience: Education, Study Abroad and Internships,’ and ‘International Strategic Partnerships and Engagement’.

Learn more about the series and see the upcoming webinars at [www.fulbright.fi/internationalization-higher-education-covid-19-era](http://www.fulbright.fi/internationalization-higher-education-covid-19-era)

# Experimenting with Partnership Speed Dating

Text MIRKA MCINTIRE

With the pandemic, establishing and strengthening diverse relationships with U.S. and Finnish higher education institutions needed to be reimagined. As a result, the Fulbright Finland Foundation team invited representatives from Finnish and U.S. higher education institutions to share hopes and brainstorm ideas for transatlantic partnerships at the *Partnership Building in the Virtual Era* online networking event.

## Lighting Partnership Sparks

The participants were matched in advance based on a survey and during the event got to know each other and their institution's work through a fun and experimental 'speed dating' session.

**Anne Salmi**, Research Funding Specialist from the University of Oulu, already reported that the online event sparked partnership interests. "Our International Office, Faculty of Education, and Research Services staff have already had a very promising follow-up meeting with their counterparts at Arizona State University, and future collaboration plans are under discussion. This and other follow-up meetings were



born from the 5-15-minute partnership building speed dates."

Participants' enthusiasm in this informal online event and their encouraging development ideas prompted the Foundation to integrate virtual partnership building speed dating as part of future webinars. "These types of virtual networking events are very good ways to meet possible future research and education collaborators," Anne Salmi concludes.

## Sharing Best Practices

The Foundation is making a conscious effort to share inspiring partnership

models that have already been tested in the U.S. and Finland. The subsequent *Inspiring Partnership Practices in the Virtual Era* webinar showcased collaboration models by Fulbright alumni **John Donnellan**, Associate Professor from New Jersey City University and **Erkko Sointu**, Assistant Professor from the University of Eastern Finland.

Watch a recording of the webinar at <https://bit.ly/3ecKUmj>

The events were organized with support from the U.S. State Department's USA Study Abroad office.

## Virtual Backpack for the New School Year

This fall, the school year started with many uncertainties. To provide some peer support for K-12 school leaders, the Fulbright Finland Foundation, U.S. State Department's Teacher Exchange Branch, and IREX invited the Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools program grantees and alumni to join an interactive *Back to School Zoom* to facilitate sharing of good practices, and brainstorm solutions to shared challenges in the U.S. and Finland.

The participants came up with ways to combine distance and in-person learning, and support staff with a new way of teaching. They also identified innovative practices for building school

community and connection in a virtual learning environment.

"The best takeaway from the event was just knowing that we are not alone, and there are other great leaders out there working hard to support kids and teachers through this unprecedented time," says Prescott High School Assistant Principal **Clark Tenney**.

The ideas and resources are stored in a Virtual Backpack: [www.fulbright.fi/back-to-school-zoom-virtual-backpack](http://www.fulbright.fi/back-to-school-zoom-virtual-backpack)

Learn more about the Fulbright Leaders for Global Schools program: [www.fulbright.fi/us-flgs](http://www.fulbright.fi/us-flgs)

Text: Mirka McIntire

## Northern Europe Higher Education Engagement

The Fulbright Finland Foundation, together with its Nordic partners in the global EducationUSA network, co-organized an engagement event for U.S. higher education institutions. In addition to country specific mobility and funding trends, the participants were briefed specifically about the Foundation's work on university partnerships and invited to contact the Foundation with partnership ideas.

Stay tuned for more regional events!

[www.fulbright.fi/work-with-us](http://www.fulbright.fi/work-with-us)

# Creative Solutions During the Pandemic

Exceptional times require exceptional solutions. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fulbright Finland Foundation has worked with its awardees individually in an effort to find the best solution for everyone's unique situation. Some have postponed their grant periods for later in the same year, while others have deferred to the next year. A few have been able to proceed with their plans as originally envisioned, and for some the Foundation has come up with creative solutions in order to enable the desired outcome. The resilience of both the Finnish and American grantees, the collaboration of their host institutions, and the understanding of the Foundation's funding partners have been extraordinary, and the Foundation is deeply grateful to all of them.

## Tailor-Made Award

Assistant Professor **Liesl Yamaguchi** from Boston College was awarded a Fulbright U.S. Scholar grant for the full academic year 2020-21 at the University of Helsinki. The U.S. Department of State, however, postponed all Fulbright U.S. Scholar grants globally to begin in January 2021 at the earliest. As Liesl had already arrived in Finland, it would not have made sense for her to travel back to the U.S. Hence, the Foundation created a tailor-made award for her for the fall term that enabled her to start her visit at the University of Helsinki in September 2020 as originally planned. Her original



**Liesl Yamaguchi**

Fulbright, on the other hand, will kick in when the global U.S. Scholar program is back in operation in January 2021.

"The Fulbright Finland Foundation moved swiftly, sensitively, and effectively in responding to the precarious situation the pandemic placed me in last spring. The Foundation's exceptional support has made it possible for me to carry out my project almost precisely as originally planned — an extraordinary privilege for which I will always be grateful," Liesl says.

## Learning Online About Online Learning

For ASLA-Fulbright Graduate grantee **Ulla Hemminki-Reijonen** the best solution was to do her Masters of Education studies at Harvard University fully online. Physically not in the U.S., she is still actively engaged with the Foundation's networks. Ulla writes about her current, unusual Fulbright experience in her article below.

**L**earn to Change the World. That is the motto of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Who would have guessed that now this 100-year-old institution needed to change its own world entirely and move all M.Ed. programs online for the first time in history?

To me as an educational technology student, this has been an excellent opportunity. Now I have personally experienced how the top professionals in this field are dealing with remote learning and I have seen their theories immediately in action.

Admittedly, it would have been nice to study on campus, feel the atmosphere inside the historical buildings, sit in a neighborhood café and talk casually with fellow students between classes. After

the disappointment with canceled visa processes and changes in plans to actually move to Cambridge, I have been extremely happy that I could still start these studies, even though they were online.

This year has allowed us to have glimpses into each other's global lives. Being the only student from Finland, I have been delighted to share pieces of my culture as well. Of course, I needed to take my classmates to a summer cottage and to sauna during the official celebration week of cultures — we just did it virtually.

I have greatly enjoyed the international teamwork during the courses. My team project topics have varied from designing a parental education app for Chinese moms to prevent postpartum depression to a thorough business plan for a design education concept for the U.S. market. I have also pitched my educational climate change innovation in the Arctic Innovation Lab for the audience located around the Arctic region, my mentor being in Greenland.

An especially meaningful project was a hands-on, educational innovation project with a local youth center in Ethiopia, where



**Ulla Hemminki-Reijonen**

I collaborated with Plan Finland. The topics of the course related to Education in Uncertainty, which were right on point for the year of global pandemic, I think.

I highly value the great, in-depth discussions in classes about the future of education. Thorough exploration of the opportunities of immersive technologies like XR and AI has helped me to make my final work proposals before the end of the semester on how to solve educational problems and increase equity in education with state-of-the-art technology.

Instead of the challenges this year has brought to all of us, we have been focusing on seeing the opportunities we instructional designers have in this transformation. I guess in the end, we do learn to change the world. We just needed to start from ourselves and be open for learning online.

Text: Ulla Hemminki-Reijonen

Read the whole article: [www.fulbright.fi/about-us/blog/learning-online-about-online-learning](http://www.fulbright.fi/about-us/blog/learning-online-about-online-learning)



# Exploring All That Finland Has to Offer

**Alexandra Lobdell, Abraham Kipnis, and Alexander Beattie** are 2020–21 Fulbright–LUT University Graduate Awardees and among the first U.S. Fulbright grantees who arrived in Finland in the beginning of the fall 2020. Alexandra and Abraham share their experiences of exploring Finnish nature and culture.

Text ALEXANDRA LOBDELL

**B**eginning a Fulbright journey amidst a global pandemic certainly presented many challenges for Abraham, Alexander, and me. These ranged from simply getting to Finland via many added bureaucratic hoops to creating a network in a brand new continent during the age of social distancing. We are so grateful for the support of the Fulbright Finland Foundation in our arrival process and creating a network for us to join as

soon as we arrived in Lappeenranta.

Since our arrival, the three of us have been lucky enough to explore Finland through a variety of outdoor adventures with each other, other Lappeenranta–Lahti University of Technology (LUT) students, and Lappeenranta community members.

### Embracing the Outdoors

Our first trip was a damp but joyful 40-kilometer bike ride around Lappeenranta to celebrate our first weekend out of quarantine together. Another highlight

was a weekend trip to Koli National Park, where Abraham and I hiked the 35-kilometer *Herajärven kierros*, and slept out in a *kota*. Through these adventures, we collectively embraced the Finnish appreciation for the outdoors and are incredibly grateful to be able to explore all that Finland has to offer.

When we are not studying, you can find us taking dips in Lake Saimaa, trekking through national parks on the weekends, biking through Lappeenranta, and enjoying lingonberries in the woods near LUT's campus.

www.fulbright.fi/  
LUT-graduate

Text ABRAHAM KIPNIS

This September I started a master's program in Computational Engineering and Technical Physics at Lappeenranta-Lahti University of Technology (LUT). LUT's curricula, centered around sustainability technology and business, attracted me to the school. This semester I have learned about current problems in physics through optoelectronics, microelectronics, semiconductor physics, nanophysics, and materials science courses. At LUT, I have an opportunity to expand my interests and simultaneously sharpen my skills in an intellectually diverse setting.

Since arriving, many things that I had previously only dreamed of or read online about Finland have been confirmed. Mushrooms and berries really do grow in the forest outside my apartment, and I can pick them if they are in season! Finns care about the environment and act like it. Everyone sorts waste, prioritizes low emission transportation, and values staying active in nature.

Finns trust each other, trust the social systems in place, and trust that everyone contributes their

share to society. Student housing and education is practically guaranteed free or low cost for citizens, studies are self-guided, and even restaurant workers make living wages. In Helsinki, although public transportation is not free, you can just walk onto a train; people rarely check that you have paid. I am constantly inspired by the level of social responsibility and maturity engrained in Finnish culture.

### Every Path Offers New Surprises

So far, I have loved exploring Finland with new friends. From well-kept bike trails in Lappeenranta, to breathtaking national park hikes, to countryside electric passenger rail, to clean city railway cars and stations, every path offers new surprises and makes me appreciate my place here a little more.

I am incredibly grateful that the Fulbright Finland network paved the way for me. Previous Fulbright-LUT University Graduate awardees were integral in getting me settled in Lappeenranta in September. In visits to Helsinki, I've been hosted by two previous grantees who diversified my ideas of what is possible in Finland and for my career. I look forward to the many great things awaiting me.

Recently, Alexandra and Alexander got their first taste of Finnish winter while attempting to trek on duckboards that were a few centimeters underwater and under a thin layer of ice in Patvinsuo National Park.





## Researching the Diverse Arctic

With the third cohort of the Fulbright Arctic Initiative scholars newly announced, **Laura Sokka** talks about her experience as a participant in the inaugural cohort of the Fulbright Arctic Initiative program in 2015–16.

**Laura Sokka** (second from the right) was in the Energy group with researchers from the U.S., Canada, Norway, Iceland, and Russia. **Greg Poelzer** (second from the left) is one of the Co-Lead Scholars of the third round of the Fulbright Arctic Initiative.

Laura Sokka works as Senior Scientist at the VTT Technological Research Centre of Finland Ltd, in the Research Area for Smart Energy and Built Environment.

[www.fulbright.fi/fin-fai](http://www.fulbright.fi/fin-fai)

Arctic areas are facing considerable problems and there are no simple solutions. While it will not solve the problems alone, a program such as the Fulbright Arctic Initiative (FAI) helps produce information and insights in support of the work of decision-makers. A valuable aspect of the program is that it emphasises the need to hear local inhabitants in the decision-making process in order to avoid repeating the mistakes that have been made in the Arctic in past decades.

In the FAI program, each participant has a personal research project focused on one of the program themes, and conducts a research visit to a university in the U.S., or to another Arctic Council member country. I visited the School of Earth Systems at Stanford University in California.

In addition to personal projects, the participants in the inaugural program that I attended formed

three groups that engaged in cooperative research. I was in the Energy group with five other researchers. In our research, we studied what a shift towards renewable energy sources would mean for the Arctic region and provided a set of policy recommendations.

The full cohort met three times over the course of the program. The first meeting was held on Baffin Island in the Canadian Arctic and the second one in Oulu, Finland. The program culminated in a one-week final meeting in Washington D.C. where the program results were presented at several events to Arctic policymakers, researchers, and the public.

The week we spent in Nunavut, Canada, clearly demonstrated how different the living conditions are in the North American Arctic compared to the Scandinavian Arctic. In the territory of Nunavut, where Baffin Island is located, energy production is almost completely reliant on energy (mainly diesel) imported from elsewhere. Most villages spend most of the year totally cut off, with airplanes serving as the only means of transport. Problems and solutions that are important in Scandinavia may not be relevant at all in Northern Canada or Alaska.

Participation in the program turned out to be a very exciting and valuable experience. The contacts established with my fellow Arctic scholars were the most valuable part. There have also been several activities after the program, including organizing a conference together and meetings between researchers and Arctic stakeholders.

### Webinar

#### Sustainable Partnerships in the Arctic

June 9, 2021

Speakers discuss practical ways to create a sustainable Arctic through international cooperation. Drawing on a panel of experts and participants from the eight Arctic Council member states, the webinar focuses on future areas for collaboration and successes in developing educational partnerships in this region. All webinar participants

will have the opportunity to participate in an interactive networking element, 'partnership speed dating', as a way to meet others and discuss potential future collaborations.

The webinar is part of the series "Internationalization of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era"

[www.fulbright.fi/internationalization-higher-education-covid-19-era](http://www.fulbright.fi/internationalization-higher-education-covid-19-era)

Peace mediation professional and Fulbright Finland alumna Johanna Poutanen talks about her experiences of peace processes around the world, the ongoing impacts of her Fulbright award in her work, and the crucial importance of women's participation in conflict prevention and resolution.

# An Inclusive Path to Peace



PHOTO: RIKU ISOHELLA

Text LOUISA GAIRN

**Johanna Poutanen**  
2015–16 ASLA-Fulbright  
Graduate Grant  
Harvard University, MA

[www.fulbright.fi/  
fin-graduate](http://www.fulbright.fi/fin-graduate)

**J**ohanna Poutanen has forged her career working in peace mediation in tense political situations around the globe. With first-hand experience of peace processes in countries as diverse as Nepal, South Sudan, Libya, Kosovo, and Northern Ireland, among others, she believes passionately in the importance of inclusivity in fostering meaningful dialogue and making positive steps towards peace. Johanna is now Head of Women in Peacemaking at the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) in Finland, one of the world's leading independent organizations specializing in dialogue and mediation, founded by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former President of Finland, **Martti Ahtisaari**. With a mission to foster inclusion and equality for women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, she leads a team of experts in informing and supporting international peace mediators and policy makers to involve women at every stage of these pivotal processes.

Johanna remembers understanding the importance of mediation and dialogue at an early age. "It seems to be an innate propensity!" she laughs. "Even when I was a kid my brother used to call me a peace mediator. If there was a disagreement in the family, I would often try to find common ground." This natural affinity was developed while attending an international high school in the U.S., where she participated in an extracurricular program on conflict

resolution. Later, she spent time volunteering in Northern Ireland and Kosovo, experiences which inspired her to pursue an M.Sc. degree in Diplomacy and World Politics at the University of Helsinki.

Following graduation, Johanna took on a variety of roles related to her studies, including working in the Strategic Planning Unit of the UN Secretary General in New York and contributing to grass roots dialogue initiatives in Kenya. But perhaps her most crucial experience was working at the Finnish Embassy in Kathmandu in the aftermath of the Nepalese civil war and ongoing peace negotiations, where she facilitated a pioneering platform for youth dialogue. "These were very formative years in a very acute, post-conflict setting, because the peace had just been signed in Nepal. There was a dire need to create a platform for peaceful dialogue on substantive issues facing the Nepalese, and particularly from the point of view of young people."

## **Crisis Management Initiative in South Sudan**

Johanna's move to CMI came in 2013, as CMI Country Manager in South Sudan at a time when political upheaval, and ultimately armed conflict, swept the country. "It was just after South Sudan's independence and our focus was on inclusive dialogue in state-building. We worked with youth and women parliamentarians, channeling input to the decision

making but also opening dialogue between the different ethnic, geographic and political groups. The situation changed very dramatically when I was there. South Sudan fell into civil war in December 2013 and all of a sudden we were working in a very acute conflict and peace process context. I was evacuated at the time, but returned a few weeks later and continued to work in support of the formal peace process through complementary means.”

Thinking back to that period of her life, Johanna remembers the experience as “very interesting, although very tough in many ways”. It was then she began considering what her next steps should be. “Witnessing the challenges that both the South Sudanese and the international community were grappling with, I wondered if there was a way to do this better. I wanted to see if there was something in research that could help me and also to take a step back a little bit. I was so immersed in the day to day, I felt the need for a break for reflection.”

The opportunity to join a mid-career program in the U.S. proved attractive. “In this sort of program you’re with your peers, and you already have some professional experience in your backpack, so you can approach things from a different perspective. Then I heard about the opportunity for a scholarship with Fulbright Finland, which of course was a critical enabler. I was very lucky to get the scholarship and then get into the school that I wanted.”

### Mid-Career Reflection and Growth through Fulbright

Johanna undertook a master’s degree in Public Administration at Harvard University’s Kennedy School of Government, where she pursued advanced studies in conflict, democracy, and negotiations, supported by an ASLA-Fulbright Graduate Grant.

“Altogether the program was a perfect fit. I was able to compile a tailored set of courses combining leadership and management, and also the latest research on civil war and democratic theory, which feeds into my interest in inclusivity in peace processes. It enabled me to dig deeper into exactly the questions that I wanted to answer. There was also a very valuable practical element to it all, developing skills like public speaking and policy writing, with a lot of self-reflection built in. Having returned to Finland I could see a tangible difference in what I learned and how I was able to develop my professional skills.”

The network of contacts Johanna developed both inside and outside the classroom is another key ongoing benefit. “We had an incredibly international cohort of students from different fields, such as public administration, NGOs, and other organizations,” says Johanna, noting that former classmates have gone on to become foreign ministers and diplomats, as well as leaders in NGOs and other organizations. In addition to keeping in touch with her classmates, she maintains links with leading researchers in her field, as well as institutions

By including women you can take a more comprehensive approach – it makes a better peace.



PHOTO: SAILA HUUSKO

in Boston and Washington, including the State Department. “These contacts and network have enabled me to open new avenues for collaboration between institutions as well as individuals.”

### Including Women for Fair and Sustainable Peacemaking

Returning to Finland, Johanna put her enhanced leadership skills and research knowledge into practice in her new role as Head of Women in Peacemaking in CMI. She explains that ensuring women’s participation in peacemaking is of vital importance. “We need to ensure that both men and women have an equal right to take part in the decision making that concerns them – and of course peace processes are major forums for political decision making. But there’s also the question of how we can make these peace processes more sustainable, more fair, and lasting in the longer term. If you completely exclude half of the population in the way you understand the conflict, what are the root causes, the drivers, and also the possible solutions, you’re missing out on an incredible resource for building lasting peace. I’m not saying that women are the peacemakers – they are also equally part of making and driving the conflict. They’re not bystanders watching the conflict from the sidelines, and they shouldn’t be bystanders to the peace process either. By including women you can take a more comprehensive approach – it makes a better peace, if you will.”

Just after the country’s independence, Johanna worked in South Sudan with a focus on inclusive dialogue in state-building.



PHOTO: SAILA HJUSKO

In support of these goals, Johanna's team works internationally and on a variety of levels. "We work a lot with peace mediators, those who design and conduct peace mediation efforts, to take this agenda of women in peace and security and put it into practice in their work. They're the key actors who define who sits at the peace table, whose interests are heard, whose concerns are taken into consideration. That's why strengthening those inclusive mediation capacities is so important. Over the past few years, we've been working with the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) and the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, convening high-level seminars on gender and inclusive mediation strategies for leading peace mediation actors, such as UN envoys or regional representatives who are in charge of ongoing peace processes. We focus on concrete tools and measures they can take to make the processes more gender-sensitive and how they can better take into consideration the rights and views of women."

"We also provide tailored support in different conflict contexts. For instance, in Yemen, we're working with women who are feeding inputs to the UN-led peace process about what the needs are, what the transition should look like, and what methods should be used to make a long-lasting ceasefire. Women are also taking part in very local level mediation efforts, for example upholding a ceasefire in a particular area or mediating in community-level conflicts. We provide support to these actors to come

together and build strategic partnerships, as well as providing resources for them to do their work."

### Working Together for Lasting Peace

Johanna describes peace mediation as "incredibly rewarding" work, but notes that the path to peace requires dedication and perseverance from everyone involved. "It's very much a team effort. There are no quick gains; and even if there is some consensus built, or a peace agreement made, in many ways it's only the beginning. Conflicts can bring out the best as well as the worst in people, and there is a lot of injustice and violence that you come across, so you have to be mindful of your own well-being. Then again you also see the resilience and creativity of people."

"I love the field that I'm in and have this sense that I'm in the right place, where I'm continuously learning and growing but also able to contribute in my own small way, in collaboration with colleagues. It's emotionally and intellectually fascinating to be part of these processes, and you learn a great deal from the people you're working with. Peace processes are these rare moments in history where you're renegotiating not only the rules of the political game but also the social contract. The longer term changes can be immense, particularly from the point of view of inclusivity. That's why I see my work with women's participation as so crucial, because it really matters. It makes a difference, both in the short term and also in the long term."

Field visit to a cattle camp in Rumbek, South Sudan, for supporting local-level dialogue.

# Researching Skilled Migrant Women's Experiences of Job Search in Finland

Text HEIDI LEHTOVAARA

**F**inland's workforce is undergoing fast-paced changes. There are major concerns about the availability of workforce in fields with a labor shortage. The overall unemployment rate has grown rapidly due to COVID-19 and jobseekers with migrant background are struggling to find work. How to find a solution to this? I delve into this topic in my dissertation, which I am working on at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Tampere University.

Despite the increase in female mobility around the globe, women continue to experience lower employment participation rates than men. Even though migrant women are more educated than migrant men, they encounter many hurdles in employment in Finland. Almost 70% of migrant women move to Finland for family reasons, which is why they often do not have professional networks in Finland.

For the first material of my dissertation I interviewed 12 highly educated women who have moved to Finland from 11 different countries: Spain, Austria, Kenya, Mozambique, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Somalia, Turkey, and Estonia.

Work was considered to be a major part of the participants' identity, and the women strongly believed in their opportunities to find work as they were highly educated and had work experience. However, the English-speaking labor market was smaller than they expected and the language barrier and Finnish language requirements came as a surprise. Finnish employers did not seem to respect earlier education or work experience.

The interviewees encountered discrimination and racism during the job search process and reported that attention was being paid to the applicant's background, name, or clothing.

Women with children seemed to face extra pressure while navigating between family obligations and searching for a job. They often prioritized their children's well-being and postponed their own career plans.

## Job Search Requires Sisu

Despite of disappointments, the participants tried to adjust their goals to current situations and used various coping strategies while navigating the Finnish labor market. Instrumental support was found from public employment and business services (TE Services), Finnish language courses, and from the third sector.

The interviewees were also active in their use of internships and work placements, and had undertaken additional training or even re-educated themselves. Professional networks were found also through voluntary work. The participants recounted the importance of being "strong." Optimism, "Finnish *sisu*," and cognitive flexibility were also emphasized.

## Ensuring Equal Recruitment

My analysis indicates that the career trajectories of skilled women are formed by gendered societal norms and expectations, including discourses on motherhood, family, and work. Women who move to Finland, especially in the role of spouses, benefit from building social and professional networks.

Discrimination experienced during the recruitment process is a significant factor slowing down employment that can and must be addressed. There are many ways, such as anonymous recruitment and training of staff from management to expert level. More positive examples of good practices by employers are needed to change attitudes and ensure equal recruitment.

**Heidi Lehtovaara** is a 2016 alumna of the Fulbright Finland Foundation. She participated in the Study of the U.S. Institutes for Scholars on U.S. Culture and Society program organized under the theme United States' reconciliation of cultural and social diversity with national unity. Having worked several years in non-profit organizations and the public sector's employment projects to help migrant women, she is currently a doctoral student at Tampere University's Faculty of Social Sciences, and works at Helsinki City Executive Office, Immigration and Employment Affairs as a manager for 25 experts.

Find out more about the summer 2021 programs at:

[www.fulbright.fi/susi-scholars](http://www.fulbright.fi/susi-scholars)



# The First Alumni Open Mic

## Discussing Early Voting in the 2020 American Election

The new virtual Alumni Open Mic series was created to bring together Finnish and U.S. alumni in an informal setting. The spread of video conferencing capability has offered the alumni community new ways to connect with one another across time zones and co-create events together.

Each session of the Alumni Open Mic series includes an expert briefing by an alumni speaker followed by an informal

Open Mic style discussion, where anyone can share their stories and news, or just simply say hello. The Foundation is fortunate to be able to draw on its rich alumni pool of experts to present in the series.

### Voting in the Exceptional Times

The speaker in the inaugural Open Mic event was 2016–17 Fulbright–University of Tampere Scholar **Peter Miller**, who currently works as a researcher at the Bren-

nan Center for Justice in New York. His research focuses on redistricting, voting, and elections. Peter’s Fulbright project in Finland focused on advance voting which gained a lot of attention during the 2020 U.S. election. The event took place two weeks before election day, and hence his presentation “Voting in the Exceptional Times,” sparked a lot of conversation among the participants.

Text: Maija Kettunen

COVID-19  
accelerated the  
shift toward voting  
prior to election  
day that was  
already underway.

- Peter Miller

One obvious effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the 2020 presidential election is that people changed how they cast their ballots, from at the polling place on election day to sometime prior to the end of the election. The topic of early and advance voting was the focus of my research during my Fulbright year at Tampere University (2016–17) and the shift away from voting on election day has only grown in importance since then.

The pandemic has made “social distancing” a prevalent concept. A Pew Research Center poll conducted at the onset of the pandemic found two-thirds of Americans would feel uncomfortable going to a polling place to vote. During the primary elections, in the spring and summer, states scrambled to hold elections while also trying to contain the virus. Voting reforms, like early in-person voting and mail voting, were rushed into operation to accomplish these goals. With the



**Peter Miller**

Researcher, Brennan Center for Justice  
2016-17 Fulbright-University of Tampere Scholar

general elections over, the 2020 election is remarkable for the rapid change in how people cast their ballots this year.

Prior to 2020, about 40% of Americans cast a ballot early. The preliminary results from the general election show that rate increased to about 64% in 2020. By comparison, about half of Finnish voters cast ballots in advance in either presidential or parliamentary elections.

The early voting rate in 2020 is, as far as I’ve been able to determine, the second-highest rate of voting early among countries where the voter can choose when to return their ballot. COVID-19 accelerated the shift toward voting prior to election day that was already underway.

How did the pandemic affect regional differences in voting patterns? Read the full version of the article by Peter Miller at [www.fulbright.fi/news-magazine/early-voting-2020-american-election](http://www.fulbright.fi/news-magazine/early-voting-2020-american-election)

[www.fulbright.fi/tuni-scholar](http://www.fulbright.fi/tuni-scholar)



# Repairing Finland's Economy After COVID-19

An Interview With Vesa Vihriälä,  
Professor of Practice, University of Helsinki,  
and Fulbright Finland Alum

Text LOUISA GAIRN

**V**esa Vihriälä has devoted his working life to economic policy analysis, serving in key economic roles at home and abroad, including within the Finnish Prime Minister's Office and the European Commission. This spring, he took on one of his most challenging tasks yet, leading a group of world-class economists to advise the Finnish Government on the impact of the coronavirus crisis. As we approach the end of a tumultuous year, how does Vesa view the impact of COVID-19 on Finland's economy, and the path to recovery?

"The Finnish economy has been seriously affected by the pandemic, but in relative terms, it's not as bad as one might think," Vesa says, noting that Finland compares favorably to other European countries both in terms of the pandemic and the resulting economic fallout. However, the recommendations he and his colleagues made earlier in the year remain unchanged. Their report proposed a three-phase strategy, moving from acute support to ensure business survival during the pandemic, to fiscal stimulus in the medium term, and finally a repair phase of reforms to increase employment and the economy's growth potential as well as to strengthen public finances in the longer term.

**"THE MOST DIFFICULT PART IS THE REPAIR PHASE.** We don't really know yet how it's going to work out. Many companies will incur serious losses, depleting capital, some may go bankrupt. Many people will become unemployed and may drift away from the labor force, remaining long-term unemployed. That means lower economic potential, and a longer-term impact on the economy, so how do we handle that? We also need to stabilize public finances," he says, noting that most forecasts suggest public debt will increase until the end of the 2020s.

To address this, Vesa and his colleagues proposed measures to increase employ-

ment and productivity, and improve the efficiency of public services. These include expanding compulsory education from 16 to 18 years of age, creating more university places, and discouraging older workers from leaving employment early.

**"THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM WORKS WELL,** and is comprehensive. However, currently we take in too few people," says Vesa, who believes more young people should continue to university, both applied science and traditional universities. "Given that other countries have also seen it necessary to increase the proportion of their populations in tertiary education, we should be doing the same. However, that requires more resources."

To fund this change, in addition to allocating more taxes to higher education, the group proposed introducing partial tuition fees for university students. However, Vesa believes this may prove difficult to implement in today's political climate.

"The proposition of tuition fees was made to indicate what sort of difficult decisions need to be taken in order to strengthen the economy with limited resources. The tax rate is already quite high, the population is ageing, but of course we want to maintain high quality and comprehensive health and social services. You have to ask the question, is there anywhere we could save public funds?"

This certainly does not mean austerity, he emphasizes. "But when hopefully the good times arrive, we need to be cautious with public finances, to build a buffer which allows us to have higher fiscal deficits again when the not-so-good times arrive."

Vesa asserts that although Finland faces a number of risks due to its ageing population, low immigration and falling fertility rate, it is also in a good position to benefit from opportunities afforded by global trends in technology and trade, and increasing internationalization.

**"ATTRACTING GLOBAL TALENT** is the most urgent thing we should be doing, and there is already some government activity working towards that." He argues that the trend for remote working and increasing online services will benefit Finland's economy, lessening the impact of its isolated geography and low population density, and attracting more people to come to live and work in Finland.

Vesa says international exchanges, such as Fulbright and Erasmus, have a crucial role to play. "Being open to outside influences is necessary for all successful nations and economies. In order for us to benefit from this, we have to improve our game. A larger proportion of our population needs exposure to foreign experiences. We need people coming here, and also we need people going abroad."

Vesa recalls his own international exchanges in the early 1980s, first with student exchange organization AIESEC and later with an ASLA-Fulbright scholarship to MIT. "MIT had highly skilled people, top minds, producing highly technical models to understand the economy. But at the same time, those very people clearly transmitted the message that the key reason for economic studies is to help to make the world a better place."

"It confirmed and strengthened my own thoughts about the best way for me personally to contribute is to be in policy analysis, be it in government or from outside. And that's what I have done all my working life. Not only is it fascinating to be part of that process, but also one can make a difference. Even making a small difference is very motivating!"

Read the full version of the interview, and listen to YLE radio program about Fulbright in Finland with an interview with Vesa Vihriälä:  
[www.fulbright.fi/news-magazine/repairing-finlands-economy-after-covid-19](http://www.fulbright.fi/news-magazine/repairing-finlands-economy-after-covid-19)

# Donors Make a Difference

*Thank you*

**D**onors help the Fulbright Finland Foundation expand exchanges between Finland and the U.S. and bring together the best scientists, academics, educators, artists, and future leaders in the two countries.

Alumni and friends of Fulbright Finland play a central role in this endeavor. Whether it is establishing a scholarship, bequeathing artwork, adding Fulbright Finland to one's will, or making a donation to the endowment funds, all gifts are clear reminders that the Fulbright Finland experience is like no other.

This year the Foundation has been the recipient of generous gifts from many partners, friends, and alumni, and we take this opportunity to convey our gratitude to all!

## Centennial Fund Supports Fulbright Finland Awards

The Fulbright Finland Centennial Fund was launched in 2016 to honor the 100th anniversary of Finland's independence. All donations to the Fund are used in full to support awards for Finnish and American students, scholars, and professionals.

Most recently the Fund has received contributions from **Daniel Cobb, David Dorman, Mike Loovis, Peter MacKeith, Ruth McDermott-Levy, Richard McElvain, Terhi Mölsä, Sharon Sandeen, Amanda Stronach, Carol Tenopir** and **Gerald Lundeen, Jane Weiss, and David Yoken.**

## Friends of Fulbright Finland Alumni Enrichment Fund

The Friends of Fulbright Finland Alumni Enrichment Fund is an endowment supporting grants for the U.S. alumni to return to Finland to continue and expand their original Fulbright projects and collaboration. Most recently the Fund has received contributions from **Marlene Broemer, Judy Corello, Bill Eaton, Nancy Commins, Nancy Damon, Kay Kohl, Douglas Maynard, and Carol Tenopir** and **Gerald**



## Alumni Donor Sharon Sandeen: Honoring Finnish Heritage

**N**othing gives me more pleasure than to contribute to the Fulbright Finland Foundation because I want to advance the goals of international academic exchange, honor my Finnish heritage, and support a truly exemplary organization.

Nearly every Sunday during the 1960s when I was growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, my family would have supper with my Finnish grandparents. Little did I know then (or even imagine) that I would grow up to become a law professor and the Fulbright-Hanken Distinguished Chair in Business and Economics 2019-20.

The opportunity that Fulbright Finland provided me was life-changing in so many ways. Professionally, it allowed me to collaborate with numerous Finnish and EU scholars about trade secret law, relationships that continue today. Personally, I was able to learn more about my Finnish heritage, meet numerous cousins, and visit the family farm that was built by my great-great-great-great grandfather, **Tuomas Pöykkö** (now the *Rovaniemen Kotiseutumuseo*).

**Lundeen**, and the Foundation's own staff team, past and present, making a joint gift to honor the memory of fellow team member **Suzanne Louis**.

**Sharon Sandeen** (r) and her sister, **Cathy Sandeen** (l), visit the family farm in Rovaniemi, November 2019.

### Work with Us

[www.fulbright.fi/work-with-us](http://www.fulbright.fi/work-with-us)

[www.fulbright.fi/serve/fulbright-finland-donation-form](http://www.fulbright.fi/serve/fulbright-finland-donation-form)



— *In Memoriam* —

## Suzanne Louis

**S**uzanne Louis, Fulbright alumna and team member at the Fulbright Finland Foundation in Helsinki, Finland, passed away on July 8, 2020 in Charlottesville, Virginia. She was 71.

Born in Kansas City, Missouri, Suzanne came to Finland for the first time in 1991 to attend a conference. She was immediately “hooked,” as she described it herself, and afterwards traveled to Finland repeatedly on holiday and on business. In 2001, she came on a Fulbright Finland Foundation Mid-Career Professional Development grant to what is now Aalto University to work on a professional project at their International Office. Five years later she retired from her position at the University of Virginia in order to become Project Consultant at the Foundation. For nearly 15 years, until the time of her death, she served in her highly impactful, volunteer position at the Foundation, and spent as much time in Finland as she could, enjoying nature, architecture, opera, ballet, concerts, and the rich cultural life.

Suzanne attended the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia,

where she received her bachelor’s degree, and went on to achieve a master’s degree in Cultural Anthropology and Architectural History at the University of Virginia. The time studying cultural anthropology led her to study Mandarin Chinese, and then spend a year teaching and studying in Taiwan, before embarking on a successful career in international educational exchange. Suzanne worked at the University of Virginia as Associate Director of International Student and Scholar programs, and later, as Director of the International Center. This provided her with a unique expertise for her later work at the Fulbright Finland Foundation where she served as a consultant in intercultural programming, an adviser on Finnish-American university collaboration, and an expert in the development of alumni programs and advancement.

Passionate about intercultural understanding and the value of international experience, she was dedicated to the Foundation’s vision and served as a driving force behind several major initiatives in the area of advancement and alumni

relations. In 2007, she helped found the Foundation’s alumni network in the United States, the Friends of Fulbright Finland (FoFF), that now engages over 700 former grantees in the U.S. with continuously growing programs. She envisioned and helped found the FoFF Alumni Enrichment Fund that awards grants to U.S. alumni for return visits to Finland to renew and expand their original Fulbright projects. She also helped the Foundation to launch its major fundraising effort to build the Fulbright Finland Centennial Fund – an endowment that supports grants for both Finns and Americans.

Suzanne epitomized the fundamental ideals of the Fulbright program: intercultural understanding and peace. And she believed that by working together individuals can make a difference and change communities and societies for the better.

Her personality was a combination of kindness and grace. At the same time, she was an individual with immense inner strength – quiet strength that was characterized with a rare persistence, a definite dose of Finnish “*sisu*.” Suzanne moved mountains, kindly and quietly, behind the scenes – and never mentioned her accomplishments.

We have lost our dear friend, a colleague, and an advisor, and it is difficult to even begin to describe the magnitude of the loss. Suzanne will be greatly missed by the entire Fulbright Finland community and by the many friends she made here in Finland, in the U.S., and on her travels around the world.

Although she knew that she was seriously ill, she was dedicated to continuing her FoFF work as long and with as much vigor as she could. She said it brought her great joy to continue to meet and engage with alumni and to see the community grow and develop.

Suzanne’s life was characterized by kindness and generosity. The best way for us to honor her and her legacy is to pass it forward.

In loving memory of Suz.

Terhi Mölsä  
CEO, Fulbright Finland Foundation



Annette Jones



Maedeh Pourrabi



John Self



Bin Yang

# FoFF Alumni Council Welcomes New Members

The Friends of Fulbright Finland Alumni Council (FoFF) represents the Fulbright Finland Foundation alumni living in the U.S. The Council shapes the future of the FoFF network and serves as an alumni advisory group to the Foundation.

This year, the Council welcomes four new members: **Annette Jones**, 2007 Fulbright Administrator Exchange, Central School of Viiala, now living in North Bethesda, Maryland; **Maedeh Pourrabi**, 2019 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching, University of Jyväskylä, residing in Alexandria, Virginia; **John Self**, 2014 Fulbright Haaga-Helia Scholar Award from San Rafael, California, and **Bin Yang**, 2018 Fulbright-Aalto University Distinguished Chair, living in Richland, Washington.

They join continuing Council members **Casie Hermansson**, **Mike Loovis**, and **Barbara Mossberg**. Council terms are two years, with a staggered rotation, and membership is on a voluntary basis. “My experience with Fulbright Finland was so rewarding that I wanted to continue staying connected in some way,” Maedeh Pourrabi explained why she joined the Council.

The FoFF Council and the alumni community remember 2018–20 Council Member **Yvonne Allen** and Alumni Liaison **Suzanne Louis** who passed away this year.

## Fostering Meaningful Alumni Engagement

For the first time in its history, the Council gathered for a Zoom call meeting in October 2020 to discuss their role and brainstorm ways to engage alumni in the U.S.

Several roles of the Council were discussed: fostering meaningful alumni engagement, serving as a bridge that helps U.S. alumni connect to each other and to the multiple facets of Fulbright Finland Foundation, promoting grant programs, contributing ideas, and championing a culture of philanthropy and giving back to the Foundation.

In the coming months, the Council will advise on the newly updated alumni webpages, continue to develop the FoFF Alumni Enrichment Award with the Foundation staff, and encourage alumni involvement in the Fulbrighter, the new online networking platform with an exclusive Fulbright Finland community.

Text: Leasa Weimer

## Get to know the FoFF Council Members:

[www.fulbright.fi/friends-fulbright-finland/friends-fulbright-finland-alumni-council](http://www.fulbright.fi/friends-fulbright-finland/friends-fulbright-finland-alumni-council)



**Vaughn Shirey**  
2017–18 U.S. Fulbright  
Fellow, Finnish Museum of  
Natural History



**Jennifer Chavez-Miller**  
2014–15 Fulbright  
Distinguished Award in Teach-  
ing, University of Jyväskylä.  
Photo: Brian Miller

## Alumni Recognized

Fulbright Finland alum **Vaughn Shirey** received the 2020 Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF) Young Researchers award. Their research addresses data bias while assessing trends in boreal butterfly diversity.

“During my Fulbright experience at the Finnish Museum of Natural History with Dr. **Pedro Cardoso**, I became enamored with using data from citizen scientists and museum collections to answer questions about biodiversity. Living in the boreal region and being able to experience nature so closely drove this fascination even further. Now, during my PhD research at Georgetown University, I am able to combine both interests to understand the response of boreal butterfly communities to climate and land use change across continents,” Vaughn says.

Fulbright Finland alumna **Jennifer Chavez-Miller** has been named the 2020 National Geographic Gilbert M. Grosvenor Educator of the Year. The award recognizes exceptional achievement in education focused on igniting curiosity and cultural understanding in students.

“My experiences as a Fulbright teacher in Finland were life-changing and fueled my passion and conviction to provide opportunities and experiences for my students to engage with the world. I am grateful for the educators and students I met in Finland who were part of my journey,” Jennifer says.

## News to share? Let us know!

[www.fulbright.fi/contact-us](http://www.fulbright.fi/contact-us)

# CAN A FULBRIGHTER FAIL?

Are failures acceptable in the Fulbright community? How to learn to embrace failures as experiences that we can collectively learn from? If productive failures precede innovations, how can we encourage alumni to share their struggles with each other to make them feel more encouraged to try out new ideas and come up with creative solutions?

Read Fulbright Finland alumna **Kirsi Cheas'** blog post where she discusses the importance of resilience, peer support, and accepting failure as part of the process of solving complex challenges.

Read the first post in the series:  
[www.fulbright.fi/about-us/blog/can-fulbrighter-fail-rethinking-resilience-times-pandemic](http://www.fulbright.fi/about-us/blog/can-fulbrighter-fail-rethinking-resilience-times-pandemic)



## Outreach Ambassadors Advise New Applicants

The Outreach Ambassadors are grantees and alumni, who have volunteered to promote the Fulbright Finland Foundation programs by developing informational sessions, representing the Foundation in study abroad fairs, and distributing grant program information at their institutions. Prospective applicants can also contact the Outreach Ambassadors to hear about their Fulbright Finland experiences.

"I'm available for presentations and informal meetups regarding doctoral and postdoctoral

research opportunities in the U.S. and Finland," says **Sanna Kivijärvi**, 2019–20 ASLA-Fulbright Graduate grantee, one of the new Outreach Ambassadors. "I'm also happy to help U.S. Fulbright scholars to integrate into academic life and living in Finland," she says. The Outreach Ambassadors are an additional support network for the U.S. Fulbright grantees, and can help them engage with the university community in their new home city.

Text: Emilia Holopainen

Learn more about the initiative and find out how the Outreach Ambassadors can help you at [www.fulbright.fi/fulbright-finland-outreach-ambassadors](http://www.fulbright.fi/fulbright-finland-outreach-ambassadors)



### Bill Eaton Joins the Fulbright Finland Team

**Bill Eaton**, 1984–1985 U.S. Fulbright Fellow, has joined the Fulbright Finland Team as an alumni consultant, on the ground in the U.S., who supports the Foundation's efforts with alumni.

"The grant did wonderful things for each of us. The Foundation continues to benefit grantees, and increasingly, alumni. We should support that. I do," Bill says.

Read more about the impact of Fulbright on Bill's life and career in the Fulbright Finland News magazine 2/2019: [www.fulbright.fi/news-magazine/investment-still-bearing-fruit](http://www.fulbright.fi/news-magazine/investment-still-bearing-fruit)

### Join the Exclusive FULBRIGHT FINLAND COMMUNITY at a Global Fulbrighter Network

This free and private online platform allows the alumni to connect, network, engage, and collaborate with other alumni and grantees with the ease of one shared network.

Join today and share updates about your academic and professional pursuits and accomplishments, and reminisce with other alumni and grantees about your favorite Fulbright Finland experiences.

We look forward to your active involvement with our Fulbright Finland community!

[www.fulbrighternetwork.com](http://www.fulbrighternetwork.com)



# Appointment News



Elina Ravantti



Nazanin Berarpour

**E**lina Ravantti has been elected the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Finland–America Educational Trust Fund. Ravantti is the Director General of Communications at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Trust Fund, founded in 1976, is a core funder of

the Fulbright Finland Foundation.

**Nazanin Berarpour**, Deputy Counselor for Press and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Embassy, Helsinki, has joined the Board of Directors of the Fulbright Finland Foundation to succeed **Ethan Tabor** who recently completed his post in Helsinki.

The Foundation welcomes Nazanin Berarpour, and conveys a sincere thank you to Ethan Tabor for his dedicated service.

[www.fulbright.fi/about-us/board-directors](http://www.fulbright.fi/about-us/board-directors)  
[www.fulbright.fi/about-us/finland-america-educational-trust-fund](http://www.fulbright.fi/about-us/finland-america-educational-trust-fund)

## FULBRIGHT FINLAND FOUNDATION 2020

### 94

grantees,  
45 Finnish and  
49 U.S. grantees

### 1,6

million euros  
awarded as grants

### 64

events throughout  
Finland and online

### 4100

client contacts  
and event participants

[www.fulbright.fi/  
about-us/year-focus](http://www.fulbright.fi/about-us/year-focus)



## A New Staff Position Helps Develop Digital Platforms

**A**t the start of the pandemic the Fulbright Finland Foundation quickly pivoted its events and services onto digital platforms. The Foundation's Board of Directors defined strengthening digital capacity as a strategic focus, and to support this development, created a new staff position of Digital Platforms Coordinator.

The Foundation team is pleased to welcome **Mihkel Vaim** in this new position.

Initially, Mihkel joined the Foundation in 2018 as an intern, followed by project positions as Program Assistant, and in September he started in his new role as Digital Platforms Coordinator. In addition to coordinating the digital platforms, he provides in-office technical and IT support, and assists with the Foundation's U.S. student and scholar programs.

### FULBRIGHT FINLAND NEWS

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** Terhi Mölsä **EDITORS** Maija Kettunen (Managing Editor) **DESIGN AND LAYOUT** Tanja Mitchell, Grafee **EDITING OFFICE** Fulbright Finland Foundation, Hakaniemenranta 6, FI-00530 Helsinki, FINLAND **TEL.** +358 44 5535 286 **E-MAIL** [office@fulbright.fi](mailto:office@fulbright.fi) **ISSN** 2489-2149 (print) **ISSN** 2489-2157 (online) **PAPER** Scandia White 150 g/m<sup>2</sup> and 115 g/m<sup>2</sup> **PRINT CIRCULATION** 600 **PRINTED BY** PunaMusta Oy **ONLINE** [www.fulbright.fi/fulbright-finland-news-magazine](http://www.fulbright.fi/fulbright-finland-news-magazine)

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**FULBRIGHT FINLAND  
FOUNDATION**

**THE FULBRIGHT FINLAND FOUNDATION** is an independent not-for-profit organization based in Helsinki, Finland.

Its purpose is to promote a wider exchange of knowledge and professional talents through educational contacts between Finland and the United States.

The Foundation collaborates with a range of government, foundation, university, and corporate partners on both sides of the Atlantic to design and manage study and research scholarships, leadership development programs, and internationalization services.

## Finland-America Educational Trust Fund

The Fulbright Finland Foundation is financially supported by the Finland-America Educational Trust Fund.

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# Fulbright Finland Foundation's *Vision*

**is to empower the minds that will find global solutions to tomorrow's challenges by fostering academic and professional expertise and excellence in leadership.**

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**Fulbright Finland Foundation  
Hakaniemenranta 6  
FI-00530 HELSINKI  
FINLAND**

# Calendar

## December

**10.12.**

Webinar: Reimagining  
Comprehensive  
Internationalization

**14.12.**

Virtual Welcome to  
Finland – Fulbright Buddy Event

**17.12.**

Fulbright Finland Foundation  
Board Meeting

**18.12.**

Trust Fund Board Meeting

**28.12.2020 – 6.1.2021**

Fulbright Finland Office Closed

## January

**14.1.**

Webinar: Prioritizing Health,  
Safety & Security: Hosting  
American Students

Fulbright Finland Foundation  
Board of Directors Annual  
Meeting

**26.-27.1.**

Arrival Orientation for  
U.S. Fulbright Grantees

## February

**5.2.**

North American Studies  
Roundtable

**9.2.**

Webinar: Championing  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in  
International Education

## March

**9.3.**

Webinar: The New Virtual Student  
Experience: Education, Study  
Abroad and Internships

**19.-20.3.**

American Voices Seminar

## April

**15.4.**

Webinar: International Strategic  
Partnerships and Engagement



## May

**5.5.**

Webinar: Embracing Change:  
New Partnership Models

Pre-Departure Orientation for  
Fulbright Finland Foundation  
Awardees to the U.S. and Fulbright  
Finland Award Ceremony

**VIRTUAL FULBRIGHT FORUM  
2021: EDUCATION, INNOVATION,  
SCIENCE AND ART**

Multiple online sessions during  
April-May, 2021

Hear about the projects that the  
current U.S. Fulbright scholars and  
students are doing in Finland.

The program will be published at  
[www.fulbright.fi/about-us/events/  
fulbright-forum-education-  
innovation-science-and-art](http://www.fulbright.fi/about-us/events/fulbright-forum-education-innovation-science-and-art)