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*Katherine Burnett (far right) and Sylvia Shurbutt (center) in 2017, with one of Burnett's University of the West of Scotland colleagues, as they dined on the coast near Ayr, Scotland, to finalize the agreement between the APST certificate program at Shepherd and the University of the West of Scotland's M.A. program.*

## Appalachian Studies Graduate Students to Attend the University of the West of Scotland

Just a few years ago, Dr. Sylvia Bailey Shurbutt visited the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) for a second time to talk about exchange and study abroad partnerships with the UWS. Shurbutt had delivered a paper on this trip to UWS's Ayr and Paisley campuses near Glasgow, where world Global Warming talks took place this fall. On this second trip, Dr. Katherine Burnett, who works today as a senior lecturer in the School of Business and Creative Industries and will be involved directly with Shepherd graduate students working this spring at UWS, had convinced her dean that the Appalachian studies students at Shepherd University had an intimate connection with the Scottish students that studied at the university, and this connection by way of language, cultural roots, and heritage could be encouraged through the study abroad experience.

The UWS had agreed to accept the APST graduate certificate, now the first module of the Shepherd APST M.A. degree, as their own first module of their cultural studies component of the M.A. in creative media practice at the UWS, and this agreement has led to a fruitful pathway to two master's degrees for Shepherd graduate students.

Three Appalachian studies M.A. students will head for Glasgow in January to complete their studies. Poet and teacher Ellen Wade, one of the 2018 NEH Misty Mountains teachers now finishing the Shepherd M.A. program, as well as award-winning writer Karen Spears Zacharias, and teacher Renee Ritenour, one of the original BRIDGE Institute teachers at Shepherd who joined the M.A. program in 2020. All three have finished their graduate certificate requirements

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## Diwali/Tihar Festivities *Shared with Community*

The Diwali/Tihar Hindu festival was observed at Shepherd University the evening of Thursday, November 4. Pragya Karmacharya, joining via Zoom from the midwest, extended a welcome and told the story of Diwali. International student Sujata Sharma from Nepal (Zooming from India), sang the traditional prayer and summarized the highpoints of Hindu mythology and festival traditions. Attendees participated in the lighting of the lamps to spell “Happy Diwali” and created colorful paintings on the concrete known as “rangoli.”

Diwali is a religious festival of lights celebrated over five days by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and some Buddhists, especially Newar Buddhists. Also

known as Deepavali, it is India’s most important festival of the year. Celebrations begin two days before and end two days after the new moon day of Kartika in the lunisolar calendar. The festival is called Tihar in Nepal and the Indian states of Sikkim and West Bengal which house a large number of ethnic Nepali people.

The festival is characterized by indoor and outdoor floral decorations and oil lamps (diya), colorful paintings (rangoli), family feasts, the sharing of gifts and sweets, singing and dancing, worship ceremonies, light fireworks, and indoor decorations in front of an altar. The festival is “a time to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over

evil.. The festival celebrates Lord Rama’s triumph over the evil spirit, Ravana. The traditional greeting, “Happy Diwali/Tehar,” wishes happiness, prosperity and joy to the receiver. Diwali/Tihar is a time of togetherness and goodwill with the ageless message...good can triumph over evil.

The event was sponsored by Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars as well as the Multi-Cultural Leadership Team at Shepherd. Drs. Aart Holtslag, Keith Alexander, and Ann Marie Legreid worked with Ben Pigott to coordinate the event. ■

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and will be able to have their required electives waived in lieu of the study abroad program with the UWS. All have plans for creative projects while in Scotland that will contribute significantly to the Appalachian region. Zacharias will be finishing a historical fiction piece on the Carrie Buck story and tying it to Scotland, Wade will complete a documentary on the Affrilachian and the Black Scottish poets (her work is supported by Stubblefield), and Ritenour will finish a photography and West Virginia ancestry project.

Ritenour’s West Virginia roots go back almost 300 years in the state. All three graduate students will receive UWS scholarships amounting together to £4500.

The partnership with UWS is part of the Celtic Roots Global Appalachia component of the Appalachian studies program, which now includes an undergraduate B.A./B.S. interdisciplinary degree with a similar Celtic Roots component. Shurbutt said this about student interest in the

new program, “The Scots-Irish connection in the region is still strong, not only in terms of similar customs and traditions but the essential Ulster Scots-Irish fundamentals of the Appalachian dialect apparent in the language going back to the 17th and 18th centuries.” Shurbutt has said that these global studies experiences for Appalachian studies students encourage West Virginians to look less inward and see the larger fabric of the world today. ■





# Phi Beta Delta *Holds Hybrid Induction*

In a hybrid ceremony held November 11, 16 new members were added to the Shepherd chapter of Phi Beta Delta Honor Society for International Scholars. Keynote speaker Hannah Evans, senior analyst with Population Connection, gave a presentation on the intersection of population, climate change, and social justice. She presented via Zoom from San Diego. Dr. Mark Stern, university professor emeritus of political science and former Shepherd vice president for academic affairs, was awarded honorary status in the Society. Dr. Stern, speaking via Zoom from Arizona, provided a few closing remarks at the ceremony, emphasizing the value of international education. Dr. Stern led the campus in strategic planning for internationalization and has been an ardent supporter of international initiatives at Shepherd. International student Sujata Sharma, a native of Nepal speaking via Zoom from India, noted the value of studying outside of her own culture. Inductee bios were read by Drs. Denis Berenschot, Keith Alexander, and Ann Marie Legreid. President Aart Holtslag presented inductees with medallions and certificates. Sharon Ann Carpenter coordinated the set-up, Cecelia Mason handled the photography and press release, and Dr. Kelly Hart and Donna Miller arranged for ca-



tering. Since its inception in 2016, the chapter has inducted 97 eligible students, staff, and faculty. ■

*Top: Inductees (starting at bottom left): Madalaine Fleming, Monica Fleming, Kady Sanogo, Dr. Petru Drumea, Dr. Marat Akopian, Tayler Sisk, Joanna Hernandez, Jacob Cross, Dr. Holley Ralston.*

*Additional inductees (not in photograph). Dr. Amy DeWitt, Dr. Mark Stern, Ellen Wade, Sujata Sharma, Roxanne Lingenfelter, Jennifer Jaafar, and Karen Zacharias.*

*Mark Your Calendar*

**36th Annual Phi Beta Delta Conference — May 2022**

**at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana**

Call for paper proposals forthcoming. Visit the Phi Beta Delta website for updates, [www.phibetadelta.org](http://www.phibetadelta.org). ■

## Learning from the Land – *Virtual Symposium*



Phi Beta Delta Honor Society (national) and the Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Center (APIDA) at San Diego State University teamed up to offer a half-day symposium on indigenous peoples' methods for sustainable agriculture. One of the highlights was a presentation by Margo Robbins of the Yurok Village of Morek, "Fire is Medicine," on how to maintain a balanced ecosystem using fire as a land management tool. Virginia Hicks, Sharon Carpenter, and Ann Marie Legreid participated from the Shepherd Phi Beta Delta chapter. The event was held in connection with International Education and Geography Awareness Week, November 15-19. ■





## Madalaine Fleming Recipient of *Gilman International Scholarship*

Madalaine Fleming, an undergraduate student at Shepherd majoring in Global Studies, has been awarded a prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to study abroad. The \$4,000 scholarship will support her study at University College Cork in Ireland in spring 2022. The Gilman International Scholarship is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is named for Congressman Gilman who served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 30 years.

In her interview for a Shepherd press release, Fleming said she is "looking forward to par-

ticipating in courses within University College Cork's Celtic Civilisations program. The aspect I'm most excited about," she continued, "is embarking on the journey and learning not only about another place and culture, but also learning much more about myself and how I relate back to my home culture while abroad. I'm eager to see where the experience takes me and share that experience with fellow students in Ireland. Fleming hails from Greenbank, West Virginia. ■

*Left: Madalaine Fleming*



## Study Abroad Update: *International Guests Hosted at Shepherd*

The Study Abroad Office, along with the Shepherd's chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the Political Science Honors Society, and the Study Abroad Club, hosted representatives from Salzburg College (Austria) in September and Hochschule Mittweida (Germany) in October. Students and faculty discussed student life in Austria and Germany as well as opportunities for study and other possible collaborations in both countries.

Subject to COVID-19 conditions, Shepherd students are making plans to study abroad starting in Spring 2022. There is still time for students to make plans for next spring and summer. Interested students should contact the Study Abroad Office, Dr. Samuel Greene, director. ■



## Women and Engineering: *U.S. and Brazilian Perspectives*

Dr. Chiquita Howard-Bostic co-published an article recently in the Brazilian Journal of Political Studies:

Howard-Bostic, C., Almeida de Andrade, D., and Sapucaia Machado, M. (2020). Women and Engineering: Brazil and United States Pathway, A Closer Look, Brazilian Journal of Political Studies (Revista Brasileira de Estudos Políticos - RBEP). ■

*Top: Dr. Chiquita Howard-Bostic, chair, associate professor of sociology, associate vice president, diversity, equity, and inclusivity.*



Dr. Samuel Greene

## Dr. Samuel Greene Shares Expertise with International Audience

Dr. Samuel Greene, assistant professor of political science, gave a Zoom briefing on federalism to a group of Saudi Arabian officials participating in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) in July 2021. The briefing combined a treatment of how federalism works in the U.S. context at the national, state, and local levels as well as a comparison of federalism in Gulf states with the U.S. system based on Dr. Greene's experience in the region, to prepare the delegation for meetings with officials across different levels of government. The IVLP is a program managed by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, with the goal of helping foreign professionals better understand the U.S.

Greene also presented a working paper, "Reform and Innovation in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)," at the Southeast Regional Middle East and Islamic Studies Society virtual meeting, October 12-13, 2021 (joint with Sobhon Khairy). The project explores recent reforms in the United Arab Emirates in the context of its goal to diversify its economy by developing a knowledge economy. It concludes that reforms in the UAE's laws, including citizenship for foreign nationals and reforms liberalizing its penal code and social policies, are a useful step towards this goal but insufficient to reach the country's ambitious targets without further reforms. ■

## Dr. Cecilia Melton: *The La Plata Estuary to Specialist in Aquatic Biosciences*

Dr. Cecilia Melton, assistant professor of environmental studies, was asked to share her story from her early years in Uruguay to her career path to Shepherd.

### Tell us something about your early life and interests.

I grew up in Uruguay, spending a lot of time on the beaches of the La Plata estuary, and became very interested in the ocean and estuary life when I was very young. I discovered Jacques Cousteau when I was still a little kid and he inspired me to follow a career in oceanography. There was not an oceanography program in Uruguay then, so I applied for a program to go study in Brazil (Fundação Universidade Federal do Rio Grande). I left my country right after turning 19. During my undergraduate studies, I became interested in aquaculture; I had a paid internship in the aquaculture station in my second year in school (it was a five-year program). I had also always been interested in genetics, so I ended up combining both in my graduate studies. I received a master's in biological oceanography at the same university in Brazil. There was a renowned lab in Japan that did research with genetics applied to aquaculture, so I applied for a scholarship from the Japanese government to study there. I went to the Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology where I graduated with a Ph.D. in aquatic biosciences.

### Describe your path in coming to Shepherd as a professor.

I came to the U.S. as a post-doctoral fellow at

the USDA Cool and Cold Water Aquaculture Research Center in Leetown, Virginia, down the road from Shepherd. While working there, I started to realize that being a full-time scientist was not what I wanted; I did not want to be in a lab all day and I missed interacting with more people, so I started thinking about other career choices and teaching seemed like a good fit for me. After the post-doctoral contract was over, I had the opportunity to come to Shepherd as an adjunct, and I did that on-and-off for a couple of years. Then I became a lecturer and finally was hired as a tenure-track faculty three years ago.

### How does your international background inform your teaching. Research?

Besides living in different countries, I have had the opportunity to travel, and I always liked exploring less touristic places, to experience the different cultures, their daily lives. While being an on-and-off adjunct I also worked as a medical interpreter at a community health clinic. We worked with migrant workers who came to the apple orchards, as well as migrants that were established in the U.S. I like learning about their values, what is important to them, how their lives are different than mine. We cannot separate environmental issues from human issues and I believe that by learning how things are done in other countries and the different human realities, it makes us more rounded, and more humble. We can learn from them and change things here as well. Because of that, I always try to include glimpses of other cultures in my lectures, with examples, videos,



and case studies.

### What are some of the benefits and challenges of living in multiple countries?

I believe that being exposed to different cultures helped me become a more open-minded and less judgmental person, with a better understanding of the different challenges that humans face to thrive or even just survive. The biggest challenge for me was to leave friends behind, friends that had become family (and still are!), and then start all over again, meeting new people, making new friends. It was fun when I was younger, but became harder as I grew older. It is true what they say, after living in more than one place, part of your heart will always be elsewhere. But I would not change those experiences for anything. If you can, go abroad! Even if it is for a short vacation, visit off-the-beaten-path places, experience other cultures. It is so worth it! ■



# Teaching, Language, Music. *Life is Good.* by Eva Olsson

My name is Eva Olsson. I come from a land far away—well, from across the ocean. I grew up in Sweden in the 1970s, and even though I love my country (and sometimes get severe pangs of homesickness), I always imagined myself living abroad. I have now lived in the U.S. for 19 years.

Sweden has a relatively homogeneous population. Maybe this is why I have always been fascinated by other cultures—in particular, different music and languages. In middle and high school, I focused on languages. I studied English, French, and German, but I also got obsessed with Japanese after watching a movie in which the main character was taught the language. I went straight to the library and checked out a textbook.

After high school, I felt I needed more music in my life. So far, I had taken recorder lessons (yes, it's a real instrument), some voice lessons, and sung in a choir. My music collection had gone from all ABBA songs (obviously) to other pop/rock/blues music and a few random items, such as Bollywood songs and Persian flute pieces. Two years in a pre-college music program immersed me in theory, singing, playing instruments, and performing. At this point, my collection had grown more diverse in terms of cultures: Japanese Shinto music, Cuban Santeria music, West African drum music, Indonesian gamelan music, and Australian didgeridoo music, for example.

At age 20, I realized that I missed studying languages, so I decided to combine my two interests. In Sweden, you can get a two-subject education degree for middle/high school. I applied to the University of Gothenburg—only 45 minutes from home—and spent four years studying music, English, and teaching. In addition, I had the opportunity to earn a Eurolta certificate (teaching languages to adults). In the summer, I joined the one-week folk music festival held in the middle of Sweden, where I signed up for intriguing classes like nordic folk singing (beautiful!), Mongolian throat-singing (impossible!), and Bulgarian women's choir (my favorite).

Having earned my degree, I worked in middle/high school for a few years. I enjoyed seeing the students pick up English so easily, and I tried to spread my interest in other cultures through music. I also taught evening classes for adults



who wanted to improve their English.

Meanwhile, I had kept in touch with a young man from Maryland that I met on a study trip to Washington, D.C., in my senior year at the university. We decided to spend some more time together, which is how I came to spend two semesters at the University of Maryland, College Park. As you may have guessed, the classes I chose were linguistics, American literature, and world music.

My year in the U.S. inspired me to enroll for another semester of English back home. Also, my fascination with Japan had not diminished much over the years, and I started studying the language for real. I did well. I was awarded a study tour by a language institute in Kansai. The visit to Japan, of course, was incredible in many ways: meeting students from all over the world who loved the language; seeing famous places like Hiroshima, Osaka, and Tokyo; and, most of all, staying with a Japanese family for a weekend. Linguistically, though, it was very tough and overwhelming. I often think of that experience now if I have a student that is struggling.

The young Marylander and I were still keeping in touch by mail, phone, and frequent flights over the ocean. Because of his connections to Germany, we traveled in that area, exploring Berlin, Cologne, Munich—and further east Krakow, Prague, and Budapest. These were no fancy trips—we went by train with just our backpacks and stayed in hostels (and occasionally, private homes). This was good German exercise (I was glad for my fluent companion!). However, I did not have much use for my Japanese.

In 2002, I came over to the United States to stay. I married my fellow linguist and traveler, Keith Alexander, and we moved into an apartment in Martinsburg. The restaurant we had our wed-

ding celebration in offered me my first job, soon supplemented by a retail position. (I discovered the American tradition of working multiple jobs.) Of course, my intention was to teach, so I went to the CTC Shepherd to inquire and was utterly taken aback to find that there was enough interest to start a Swedish course! It was wonderful to help bring this group closer to their Swedish heritage. The connection to Shepherd University was strengthened by Keith taking a position as a history professor in Shepherdstown. Not long after that, we were able to move here.

Our lives were enriched by the arrival of two precious sons (now 10 and 14!), who I took care of for a number of years before returning to the workforce. First, I worked in food services, but then I discovered the International Affairs Office and its Intensive English Language Program. Here was a chance to bring cultures together, to teach (and learn), and work with languages! I was fortunate enough to get hired as a teaching assistant to the IELP director and instructor. Together with the others in the department, we guided international students through the linguistic, cultural, and technical hoops of starting a college education in a different country.

I took over the teaching responsibility for all but one of the IELP classes about two years ago. Teaching a language has so many aspects to it, and the ways to make it personal are endless. Even during the physical distancing and the Zoom classes, I have felt very close to the students. We have had such amazing young people in the program, and every semester brings a new mix of cultures to the university.

And the music side of my life? Well, Shepherd had the solution to that, too: the Masterworks Chorale for me and Keith, the Youth Chorus for the kids. Also, all four of us are taking piano lessons in the music department. Teaching, language, music—life is good. ■



## Dr. Denis Berenschot: *Languages Swirl, Traveling Near to his Heart*

Nelson Mandela said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language *THAT*, goes to his heart.”

Languages swirl around my head all the time and so on any given night, I dream in many languages. Traveling, however, is truly near to my heart. I came to the United States as an international student with a scholarship to play water polo in Arkansas at a time when Bill Clinton was just a governor. As a Spanish-Dutchman, educated in French, you could say that I was comfortable with the idea that I was never quite going to belong anywhere. Three undergraduate and four post-graduate degrees later, and with an indomitable penchant for run-on sentences, I fell in love with exploring the world. Traveling became more than a hobby; it became my passion, an irrepressible, benign addiction.

I went to Cuba nearly 30 times. First, in order to work on my dissertation. Later, I returned to research various authors, film directors, and playwrights or simply to experience history in the making. I lived in Peru and in Costa Rica where I went on a deep exploration of self and finally in 2004, my journey took me to Shepherd University. Other universities never offered me the opportunity to create programs from scratch. At Shepherd University, I started a B.A. in Spanish and in Spanish education as well as a Master of Arts in Teaching Spanish. Most importantly, I introduced, not without controversy, a study abroad requirement for all these new majors. I believe that language acquisition and cultural understanding should not stop at the classroom door. I am convinced

that study abroad is the best way to solidify students’ language skills and to broaden their cultural understanding of the Spanish-speaking world and by comparison, of the society of their birth. I have since organized and led over 20 study-abroad programs to Peru, Argentina, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Spain, and Cuba. Many of these programs required students to live in total immersion and to take intensive language and culture classes. Since a large portion of the fees charged by study-abroad providers are simply pure profit I have always personally organized every aspect of my trips thereby saving our students a significant amount of money. I thought this was only fair since I required them to take such a trip in order to graduate in the first place.

Setting up a study-abroad opportunity represents a considerable organizational effort that generally is not adequately valued as part of faculty professional development. Yet, the value of these trips as a transformational experience for the students partaking in them is so dramatic and long lasting, that it effaced all my reluctance and diminished all obstacles. From an organizational standpoint, the actual trip represents just the tip of the iceberg, the culmination of a yearlong process. Furthermore, the actual trip is often over in a blink of an eye. Students re-adapt quickly to the daily grind of life at home upon their return. For some, it was their last chance to have a significant travel opportunity before getting caught-up in “adulting. However, in some cases, as it was for me, it represents the start of a life-long hunger for international experiences. Rarely do students return unmarked by the experience. We

look back at the camaraderie, the friendships borne out of common experiences, the strange tastes and smells and sounds, the countless pictures, and maybe we remember a particular difficulty or mishap that over time morphs into a fond memory. I suspect that more often than not, students’ worldviews are just a tinge more insightful, a smidge more engaged. Ultimately, I know the experience reached some hearts when, after a while, an occasional student gives me a call out of the blue, asking if I could take their children with me on my next trip. Okay, it does make me feel old, but more importantly, I recognize that wanting a similar experience for your children, is in a way, the best endorsement for what we do here at Shepherd University. ■





# International Student Values

## Multicultural Environment

*Sujata Sharma (pictured right), a native of Nepal, was invited to share her background as well as her perspectives on the international student experience.*

Born and raised in Chitwan, Nepal, I did my schooling at Gyandarshan English Boarding School until 10th grade. Upon graduation, I went to Balkumari Nursing School and completed my diploma in nursing. I became a registered nurse in Nepal in the year 2013. After that, I went to the capital of Nepal, Kathmandu, to practice. I worked as a registered nurse at Iwamura Memorial and Research Center Hospital for three years.

In 2016, I had the opportunity to come to America for additional education and international experience. I started my American college journey at NOVA and then transferred to Shepherd University in 2019. I had applied to several universities for the nursing program, and I was selected in VCU, Notre Dame University, West Virginia University, and Shepherd University. I ended up choosing Shepherd because of the friendly environment and warm welcome I received when I first toured. Shepherd is a great fit for me because I can feel like I bring my whole self into the classroom and culture here.

Currently, I am pursuing my nursing degree at Shepherd University. I would like to continue to develop my international-level skills and experience by working with professionals over here. I want to continue to grow in my specialty while helping those in need. I want to implement the knowledge and skills that I have gained in the United States back in my home country.

There are countless differences between the Nepali and American education systems. One major

difference is the formatting. In Nepal, students have the option to join either an English medium school, where the textbook will be in English, or in a government school, where the textbook will be in the native language, Nepali. Traditional secondary schooling goes up to grade 10 instead of grade 12. In grades 8 and 10, students have to take board exams similar to the standardized American tests ACT or SAT.

After completing grade 10, students will join college for two years, where students have to choose either the fields of science or management. If students choose science, then that is medical and engineering. If students choose management, then the students will study accounting, hotel management, education, arts, and so on. If students want to change majors between the two fields (going from a liberal arts to nursing for example) then they will have to spend an additional two years going through the basic science courses.

Another major educational difference is the way of taking the exams. In Nepal, students often only take written exams, unlike in the United States where there is a mix of written and multiple choice. The grading system is different. In Nepal, only the midterm and final are graded for credit and homework is not graded, although required. In the United States, there are exams in addition to graded classwork and homework. The American system was confusing at first. I did not know that each assignment and the exams count toward the final grade. I thought the grading system was similar to Nepal and because of that I had to learn the hard way that I must do well on assignments, classwork, and tests.

Some of the benefits after studying in the United States are that I will have an international degree, which brings me value anywhere I go. Additionally, I am gaining skills that I can bring back to my home country. During my clinicals, I am trained to use new equipment and analyze results. In this era of modern health, new advances in diagnosis and treatment have changed the quality of patient care.

I am also an active member of the Multi-cultural Leadership Team (MLT), where I am improving



my leadership skills as well as attending events, which has enhanced my knowledge of cultures from around the world. In the nursing profession, nurses should know how to advocate for their patients, who may not be able to speak for themselves. Being able to become a voice for others is one of the qualities that I have embraced from MLT. I have been conducting Tihar/Diwali (traditional Nepali cultural celebrations) events on campus since 2019 with my MLT friends. The event has increased the knowledge of Nepali culture for many of the students as well as the community members. I have received a lot of appreciation from faculty, students, and community members for celebrating and informing them about the culture of Nepal.

As an international student traveling away from home for the first time, I bring my culture everywhere I go, it is embedded in my character, my taste, and my choices. As I try to fit into the American culture, I avoid the box that generalizes my Asian heritage. Coming to America was the first time I became aware of what it meant to be multicultural. In Nepal, where most everyone is Nepali, I was allowed to be an individual and make mistakes. Here, my mistakes become stereotypes for people from my country. I am working hard to frame Nepal and other countries in a good light, and I have been able to do so by spreading knowledge about my culture to my college community through a multicultural leadership team. ■

## Fulbrighters Reaching Out Across the World

Scholars around the world were invited to participate in a special Fulbright conference held via Zoom October 20-22, 2021. "Fulbright at 75: Celebrating a Legacy of Global Friendships."

The opening plenary reflected on the history of the Fulbright program from its inception in the 1940s forward to its 75th anniversary this year. Established in 1946 through the efforts

of Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright, the Fulbright Program today encompasses numerous cultural exchange programs intended to improve intercultural competence and relations

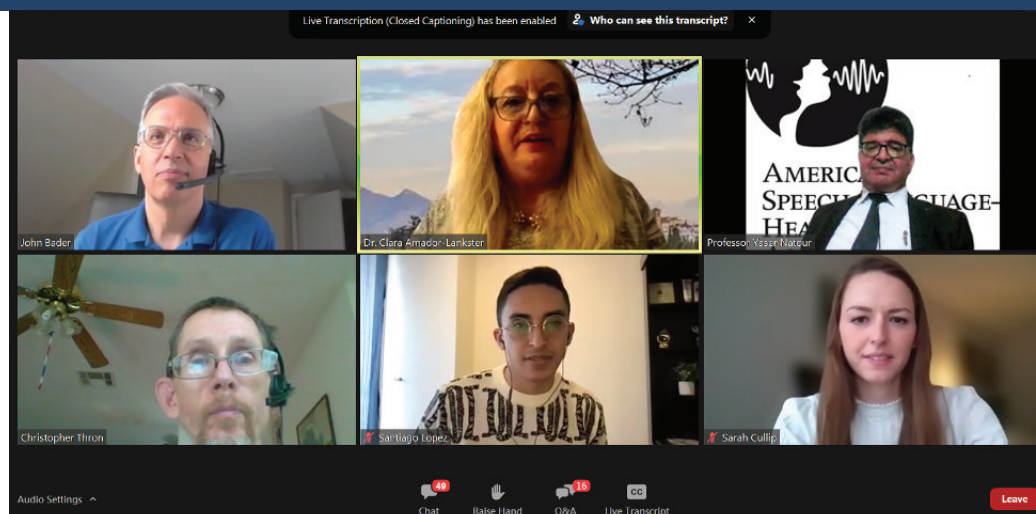
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between nations. Originally funded through the sale of World War II war surplus and later agricultural surpluses, the program was expanded by President Kennedy in 1961 with the signing of the Fulbright-Hays Act. The 1961 act put the Fulbright programs into the federal budget as a line item, which today is about \$240 million and 8,000 awards annually. The majority of awards host scholars from outside of the U.S. at U.S. research facilities, colleges, and universities.

At the fall conference, Fulbright scholars past and present shared their research on topics as diverse as student and faculty exchanges, climate change, global health, housing, immigration, language, COVID and mental health, human rights, and global citizenship. Interspersed with the research presentations was a Virtual Art Ex-



hibit featuring artistic pieces by Fulbright artists, Networking Coffee Breaks, and traditional and contemporary music and dance from around the

world. Ann Marie Legreid, a Fulbright alumna, attended the conference. ■

## Fulbright Experience: “...goals worth achieving often require ‘una lucha’ (struggle).” Reported by Amy Garsón Hampton

I was awarded a Fulbright to Nicaragua in the 2015-2016 academic year. I have not written much about the time I spent in Nicaragua because the complexity of the experience makes it difficult to reach with words. I arrived there in August of 2015 with my husband and three children, ages 11, 8, and 2. I was new to Nicaragua but no stranger to Central America. I realized that as an outsider, I was in the position of learner, not teacher. I was eager to begin the journey, to create a frame to begin to better understand, and to collaborate with Nicaraguan academics and professionals to find ways that my skills and resources could assist, or create synergy, within their work.

Despite knowing other countries in Central America intimately, despite speaking Spanish fluently, and despite being married to a Nicaraguan, there was a great deal for which I was not prepared. I was not prepared for the political implications that arose from my presence in the social work department in a public university and even less prepared for how no one would tell me directly that my existence in that space was for them, a double-edged sword.

I was not prepared for the weight of sexism’s burdens to be hoisted so heavily onto me and my daughters. The ways in which women were not acknowledged, our words not heard; I was faceless, nameless, personless—only the woman to my husband. I had not prepared my children

for the lewd remarks and noises that came consistently from grown men as they objectified women and girls publicly—including my 11-year-old daughter. In Nicaragua I was confronted with the rigid social idea that church was the only place a woman can go to be social, or spend time with other women, without being accused of ‘looking for men’ or being a ‘puta.’ Yet every weekend the local cantinas were full of men, drinking away their weekly earnings while the mothers and grandmothers set up ‘fritangas’ outside their front doors, selling food to neighbors to pay for the most basic of necessities.

What the experience in Nicaragua gave to me was resilience and the necessary strengthening self-advocacy skills. Through conversations with the embassy and networking with other universities in the country, I ended up partnering with a private university where I was able to teach a course on gender and equity, in the context of Managua, Nicaragua. I was able to work with passionate and progressive Nicaraguan activists and intellectuals who astutely analyzed the systemic social context of their country, communities, and campus. My previous experience teaching a sex and gender course for Shepherd University provided the background experience I needed to contribute in meaningful ways to the university’s gender and communication project. As an outsider, I was able to utilize my ‘lack of knowing’ to create space in which students could analyze and engage with the hegemony of



social symbols and dynamics that had previous gone unexamined. Students pulled me into their lived experience and perspective and I pushed them to ask the difficult questions. This was probably one of the most powerful teaching and learning experiences of my career as I was learning as deeply and actively as I was teaching, only in different areas and ways.

I am still sorting out some of what occurred during that academic year in Nicaragua. Learning during the Fulbright occurred at all times, not only in the academic settings. Five years later, I am still reflecting on much of the nuance and integrating the experience. It was not easy, much of it was not fun, and goals worth achieving often require “una lucha” (a struggle). ■