Inspiring Story

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Dear Fulbright friends,

I hope you’re all having a happy and healthy holiday season. I’d like to welcome you to our winter edition of the Turkish Fulbright Commission newsletter. I’d also like to bring to your attention two highlights from the past six months at the Commission. The first of these is the launching of a brand new post-doctorate grant as part of our Turkish programs. We’ve already received huge interest in this new initiative, a clear sign that it is going to fill an important gap in supporting the research and professional development of young Turkish scholars.

We are also extremely honored here at the Commission to be offering yet another new grant, The Fulbright Turkey Award in Biophysics and Biochemistry in Honor of Professor Aziz Sancar. We have recently completed the preparations for launching this new grant in conjunction with Nobel Laureate Professor Sancar and his home institution, the University of North Carolina. The person chosen for this award will have the opportunity to work under the direct supervision of Professor Sancar. We are looking forward to selecting the first recipient of this prestigious new award for fall 2018.

As always, I hope you enjoy the stories and news presented in this latest issue of our newsletter. Again, I wish you happy holidays from all of us here in Ankara and in our Istanbul office. We look forward to seeing you in the new year.

Prof. Ersel Aydınlı
News from the Commission

Annual Meeting of the Executive Directors

The EDs of the Fulbright Commissions in Europe have a conference every year and in 2016 it was hosted by the Fulbright Center in Finland between June 18-22. This conference was titled as “Crossing Borders for Global Partnerships”. In this conference, best practices were shared and future exchanges were discussed. Prof. Ersel Aydınlı provided information about the ETA Program in Turkey as a best practice.

The Fulbright 70th Anniversary Reception

Since its inception in 1946, the Fulbright Program has expanded and is now operating in 160 countries implemented through 50 Bilateral Commissions, Embassies and Partnering Agencies. The U.S. State Department held a reception to mark the 70th Anniversary of the program on November 14, 2016 in Washington, D.C. More than 370,000 individuals from across the globe have benefitted from the unique opportunities provided by Fulbright grants. The Fulbright Program in Turkey was one of the first Fulbright Programs, established in 1949. Our Deputy Executive Director, Seher Türkyılmaz Sinclair attended the reception.

Visit by the Deputy Chief of Mission

The recently appointed DCM at the U.S. Embassy in Ankara, Mr. Philip S. Kosnett paid a visit to our office with the Acting Public Affairs Officer Mr. Joe Wierichs. During this meeting, Mr. Kosnett was informed about the programs administered by our Commission.

Prof. Tanmcilar’s Visit

Prof. Murat Tanmcilar, Rector of TED University, visited our Ankara office in October, and had a meeting with our Executive Director. Effective ways to collaborate were discussed during this meeting.

New Office Coordinator in Our Istanbul Office

We now have a new Office Coordinator, Dr. Betti Delevi who will administer and oversee the activities conducted by our Istanbul Office. Dr. Delevi worked in several prestigious educational institutions prior to joining our team, and we are delighted to learn from her experience. She will be organizing outreach programs to high schools and universities not only in Istanbul but also in the Marmara region.
Our Grantees in the U.S.A. Remember Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, was remembered by our grantees on the anniversary of his death, November 10. Some of our grantees were dressed in black and observed a moment of silence on their campuses.

Thanksgiving Dinner

Thanksgiving was celebrated in our Istanbul Office with the participation of American grantees, office staff and the Executive Director Prof. Ersel Aydınlı and his wife, Dr. Julie Mathews Aydınlı. Participants pitched in to create a sumptuous dinner, shared their experiences and research, got to know each other, and joined together with a blessing that gave thanks to the many joys in their lives. They all filled out cards sharing what they were most thankful for—which turned out to be both insightful and fun. The most popular entry was “Demli Çay” (Turkish style brewed tea)!

News about Our Staff

Dr. Betti Delevi is the new Office Coordinator and Ms. Serin Alpokay Taş is the new Educational Adviser at our Istanbul Office.

Ms. Duygu Kimençe joined our staff in Ankara as the Assistant to the Executive Director and Program Assistant.

We also would like to express our sincere thanks and a warm goodbye to our colleagues Ms. Tuğçe Kaman, who worked as the Assistant to our Executive Director as well as Turkish Programs and Ms. Aybüke Uzunca, who worked as the Educational Adviser in Istanbul.
Prominent Alumni of Our Commission:
Ms. Mary Ellen Mark

Mary Ellen Mark is a famous American photographer, who is known for photographing people who were not a part of mainstream society. She was primarily known for documentary photography and photojournalism.

Ms. Mark’s interest in photography started when she was very young as she started taking photos at the age of 9. She received her Bachelor’s of Fine Arts degree in Painting and Art History from the University of Pennsylvania in 1962, and completed her Master’s degree at the same university in Photojournalism in 1964. Ms. Mark received the Fulbright Scholarship in 1965 to come to Turkey.

Her first book, Passport, which was published in 1974, was produced with the photos she took during the year she was a Fulbright grantee.

In her photos she addressed many social issues such as loneliness, drug addiction, prostitution and homelessness. However, children were the main subjects in many of the photographs she took, because she said that “I’ve always felt that children and teenagers are not “children,” they’re small people. I look at them as little people and I either like them or I don’t like them.” She believed that one particular photograph she took in Trabzon was the photo that made her.

She told the story of that photograph to Time Magazine as follows:

“In 1965, I was in Trabzon in eastern Turkey on a Fulbright scholarship. I would get up every morning and walk around the streets and look for photographs. One day, I came across this beautiful young girl, Emine. She was wearing a very babyish dress and a bow in her hair. I photographed her, and she invited me to come to her home. At her home, her mother gave me some tea and we went to the back area of her house where I took this picture. She just posed for me like that, I didn’t tell her what to do. I don’t like to photograph children as children. I like to see them as adults, as who they really are. I’m always looking for the side of who they might become. Emine was being very seductive in her own nine-year-old way. It’s interesting to me that she would show me that side of herself. When I came back from Turkey and developed the film, I saw this picture and knew it was something special. I had been photographing for a couple of years before this, and I felt that sometimes you are looking and looking, and you are not sure what you are looking for. Often you look for the cliché and what you think makes a picture. This was the first time I felt I went beyond that. I thought this photograph transcended the image and had an edge. A few years ago, I went back to Istanbul for the first time since my Fulbright. I was thinking I would love to find Emine. A local newspaper in Istanbul published the picture, and we found her through her daughter. It turns out that Emine ran off a few years after I took this photograph – at age 16 – with her boyfriend and got married. She now lives in a town not far from Istanbul with her husband, the same person: I would have liked to photograph Emine again.”

Unfortunately, she did not have the chance to photograph Emine again. Ms. Mark passed away in 2015 in New York City at the age of 75.
Fulbright Association 39th Annual Conference:
Fulbright at 70: Meeting New Challenges

The Fulbright Association, established on February 27, 1977, is the official U.S. alumni organization representing 125,000 U.S. alumni based in the U.S. The Association conducted its four-day annual conference between November 10-13, 2016 in Washington D.C. The conference welcomed over 350 people, who brought with them a wide array of experience, expertise, and perspectives. The conference featured keynote speeches by Ambassadors, members of Congress, university administrators, and leading experts in educational exchange, as well as discussions on the state of Fulbright advocacy. During the conference, five tracks were focused on: cutting-edge Fulbright projects in International Education; Peacekeeping & Conflict Resolution; Economic Development; Global Health & Sustainability. The Fulbright Association also honored Senator Richard Lugar with the 2016 J. William Fulbright Prize for International Understanding. There were over 20 Bilateral Commissions represented at the conference. Ms. Seher Türkyılmaz Sinclair, Deputy Executive Director represented our Commission.

Turkish Breakfast with Our U.S. Alumni in Washington D.C.

During her visit to Washington D.C., our Deputy Executive Director Seher Türkyılmaz Sinclair had the chance to meet with some of our U.S. alumni who live in the D.C. area, and some of whom attended the conference of the Fulbright Association. It was a great opportunity to come together and enjoy the culinary delights of a Turkish breakfast while also sharing a productive exchange on such issues as keeping our U.S. alumni connected in the States and exploring ways that alumni can advocate for the Commission’s exchange programs. It was a nice surprise to hear of the group’s effort to keep up their Turkish skills by holding weekly Turkish language classes in the D.C. area. It was a fun morning and the beautiful sunshine reminded the group of the sunny Turkish mornings despite it being November.
“Ve Ankara...” Exhibition

Prof. Billur Tekkök received a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Grant during the 2010-2011 academic year in the field of Design and Architecture. Prof. Tekkök and her team will hold an exhibition named “Ve Ankara...” between December 26, 2016 and January 4, 2017 at Mimarlar Odası (Chamber of Architects) in Ankara. The goal of the exhibition is to raise awareness of the historical and cultural richness of Ankara.

Article Published in “Plant Physiology”

Dr. Melike Bor is a 2012-2013 Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program alumna and a Professor at the Biology Department of Ege University in Izmir, Turkey. Dr. Bor has recently published an article in one of the most prestigious research journals in her field: Plant Physiology. Dr. Bor’s research is titled “Arabidopsis NATA1 Acetylates Putrescine and Decreases Defense-Related Hydrogen Peroxide Accumulation.”

You can read this article at the following link: https://goo.gl/xP63Ap

Publication by Visiting Scholar Program Alumni

Associate Professor Aslihan Aykaç received a Fulbright Visiting Scholar Grant for the 2014-2015 academic year. After completing her research in the USA, she wrote a book titled The Political Economy of Employment Relations, which was published by Routledge Press. Prof. Aykaç kindly expressed her thanks to our Commission and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES) in the preface of this book.
Marshall Scholarship Recipient

We are proud to announce that one of our ETA program alumna, Ms. Bailey Ulbricht, has been awarded a Marshall Scholarship for 2017. Bailey served as an ETA at Celal Bayar University in Manisa during the 2015-2016 academic year. While in Turkey, she also was working to expand the non-profit she started while studying at Carleton College and as a Davis Projects for Peace award recipient. Her non-profit, Paper Airplanes, works to provide English language and higher education resources for Syrian refugees, particularly through internet-based lessons via Skype and has been recognized for its efficacy by the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power. As a Marshall Scholar, Bailey will begin her Master’s degree in fall 2017 at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

A Career Dedicated to Theater

Ms. Ege Maltepe received a Fulbright Master’s scholarship in 2007 after completing her Bachelor’s degree in Acting at İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University as the top student of the Department. She received her Master’s degree from the New Actors Workshop, and since then has been writing and directing plays as well as teaching Movement Improvisation. Ege also founded an organization named SPOLINST in 2009, and she has been working on making the Spolin Improvisation Method widespread in Turkey. Among her most well-known plays are; “Variations After Joe” (2009, Cave Arts Space), “TEA for 3, A Trilogy on the multicultural face of New York” (2012, LPAC), “TITS by Prof G” (2013, Wired Arts Fest), Women of New York (2016, 4thU Artivists), and Classical for All projects; “Drama in Beethoven”, “Talking to Schubert”, “Genius #CHOPIN” and “Two Faces/Phases of Schumann”. She is currently completing production on her web series “Chekhov in New York” and directing Spolin Improvisation Workshops and Shows in New York and Turkey, as well as preparing for Classical for All’s Two Faces/Phases of Schumann (Interdisciplinary Project) and Chatty Pianist concept concerts.
Can you briefly tell us about yourself?

I was born and raised in Istanbul in the 50s, in Taksim. I spent my childhood years there until I graduated from the University of Istanbul, Faculty of Economics, with a major in Political Science in 1973. I attended a public elementary school in Fındıklı, called Namık Kemal İlkokulu and graduated in 1962.

Then I took the exams for the English High School for Boys (EHSB) and was qualified to enroll. I decided to attend that school practically by my own decision, my parents did not interfere so much. I attended the middle school there and then passed on to Şişli Terakki High School in Nişantaşı.

In high school, I was especially fond of Physics and Chemistry, so I was hoping and preparing for a career in Chemical Engineering. However, some family members who were Chemical Engineers and were actively working tried to persuade me not to go in their footsteps. They did not think that they were living up to their aspirations as Chemical Engineers at that time.

So I decided to enroll in the Faculty of Economics. So did my wife to be, whom I met at Şişli Terakki. We started to date after we were enrolled at the Istanbul University. We got engaged before we graduated in 1972, and married right after we graduated in 1973 and then flew off to the U.S.A.

How did you decide on your field of specialization? Was there a particular person or event that led you to choose your field?

At that time, the Faculty of Economics had an interesting arrangement for those students who scored above a certain GPA, they offered to enroll them in their Ph.D. program as juniors.
So in my third year, I had started the Ph.D. Program in the Faculty of Economics in 1971. So did my fiancée. We both attended regular classes and also Ph.D. classes, such as Advanced Mathematics and Advanced Statistics.

In the summer of 1972, İlter Turan, a young professor then, asked me to help him in conducting elite interviews with ex-ministers of the Turkish Council of Ministers. So I interviewed a few with him and compiled the dataset. Prof. Turan wrote one or two articles out of that data later on. But that started me with my sort of survey research experience that summer. He was also instrumental in bringing up to my attention that it would be possible for me to continue to a Ph.D. abroad, particularly in the U.S.

How did you learn about the Fulbright Program?

In my senior year in 1972, I had started to search for opportunities to study abroad. In 1964, a Fulbright Scholar from the University of Iowa spent one year at Istanbul University, Faculty of Economics. The two universities had developed a relationship, and many of the faculty members, as far as I know like Toktamış Ateş, Önder Arı, İlter Turan, Şirin Tekeli, Cengiz Arın, perhaps some others that I have forgotten now, had spent an academic year at the University of Iowa. In our senior year, we had a faculty member, also from the University of Iowa, teaching a course at the Political Science department, Prof. William Welsh, an expert in East-European politics. He taught a course on international relations and I took his course. I guess I did well in that course so he wrote me a letter of recommendation. That is more or less the Iowa connection.

Things moved very fast, I applied to a number of universities and I received acceptance from a couple of universities including the University of Iowa. They offered me a tuition waiver and a living stipend which helped me to make my mind up. I also won the Fulbright grant; but used it for health insurance and return ticket.

How did you feel when you first arrived in the U.S.A.? What impressed you the most?

Travel then was nothing like what we have right now. We flew with Lufthansa from here to Frankfurt for a connection to Chicago, then another connection flight to Iowa. But because of a strike, we missed the connection. We flew on the next morning. Of course, there were no mobile phones, no direct phone connection at that time. So I sent a telegram to my professor, informing him of the problem. So we arrived at Chicago, big busy airport. Again by coincidence, we met some customs officer from Iowa and he gave us a little briefing about the place. He helped us with our luggage and we had the transfer. We arrived one day late according to the schedule. We got out of the plane, a cab driver approached us and he gave us an envelope. The letter said “take this cab, he knows where to take you”. So my professor took care of everything, he also hosted us for a few days until we found a place to stay. We found student housing, with a bus connection. We had no car at that time so we started up from the rudimentary level, but when you are 22 anything can happen. It was not that big of a deal making the adjustment. And one important thing to remember about Cedar Rapids is that the famous Czech composer Dvorak lived there and he composed his famous symphony “From the New World” there.

Did you travel to different parts of the U.S. during your grant period?

My brother was also studying in Cleveland, Ohio so we went there. We had relatives living near Ann Arbor, Michigan, we also visited them. We also had a tour of the U.S. with two other Turkish graduate students, one was a post-doc fellow, Prof. Mustafa İlhan who serves at Hacettepe University, and another friend of ours, Gürol who had a 1973 Chevy Impala. It was a very nice car but it was about the time of the strict speed limits since there was the oil crisis, so we had to be very careful with that.
How did your Fulbright grant help you in the USA?

My Fulbright grant which provided me with health insurance came in very handy when I fell ill and was hospitalized just before I returned to Turkey. They covered all expenses, I didn’t have to pay for anything at all. The fact is, at the end of your stay you have used up most of your resources, and are not left with anything extra to cover this kind of an emergency. I also used the return ticket of course, to come back to Turkey.

Looking back on the four years you spent in the U.S., how do you think it impacted your life, both personally and professionally?

The University of Iowa, at that time, was the most important institution on legislative studies. Either by coincidence or by design, they had accumulated some of the major researchers in the field of legislative studies. So, the connections I made there, and the work I was involved with helped me later on in many different ways. Where we lived, which was a student housing, there was a lot of interaction between neighbors who may not be attending the same programs of course. We were able to mingle quite a bit, that also created an opportunity to create a community. In the summers, we played volleyball every night. We shared information on when the computer center would be free. We started to help each other with babysitting. This of course made it a lot easier to adjust to the new environment and to the new culture. We “scratched each other’s back”.

I kept in contact with many of these people. For example, my advisor, Gerhard Loewenberg – he was a very methodical person. He would give me an assignment, to write a chapter; I would deposit it on time, then he would give me an appointment for several days later. When I’d arrive in his office, he would be ready with comments, corrections, notes, and suggestions on how to improve what I had written. When there was a problem with statistical methods, he would refer me to another faculty member to get feedback. Professor Loewenberg would give me dates, and would expect me to deliver on those dates.

His methods made it possible for me to write my dissertation in a much shorter period than it could have taken. I adopted his methods and standards as both a young academic, and all through my own career, with my advisees. I was also able to learn a lot from other staff members from other fields. Vernon Van Dyke taught us to read a lot, and how to read as well: skimming, focusing, identifying important aspects. I took Methodology, Economics, Epistemology, Philosophy courses... I didn’t only study legislature systems, I also had instruction on international politics, methods of politics, comparative politics, comparative methodology, and research techniques.

I was involved in another research project, as a principal investigator, and not as an assistant this time, on rural political change. I worked on this after I got back from Iowa, from 1978 to 1980. And for the second semester in 1980, taught Middle East Politics and Comparative Politics as well as the findings of this research in the University of Iowa as a visiting scholar. After the 70s, I produced some work on political culture in Turkey, with the help of that study, enabling me to have a relatively insightful look into the culture of rural areas and also understanding how politics interacted with economics at that level, the services provided by the state, how people were contacting bureaucracy and influencing political processes through voting and other participatory acts. We found out, for example, that the education level of women played a crucial role in their voting behavior.

Are you still working on this study? What else have you worked on through the years? What kind of projects are you currently working on?

No, not anymore on rural communities, as they have changed completely; now we have formerly rural, newly urbanized poor. I do a lot of election studies, at the time of elections. I work on participation and I have recently published a piece on 40 years of political participation, beginning from 1974 until 2014. I also

“Helping graduate students with their dissertations, and then follow their academic careers also gives joy, it’s uplifting.”
You have been in academia for 39 years. What do you like the most about being in academia?

Trying to find answers to some riddles of the substance matter that we investigate. It’s a painstaking but joyful process. It’s especially satisfying when you have success in finding answers, then that’s very helpful, gratifying and fulfilling. I do enjoy teaching, mostly graduate students, although it seems there is less and less interest in instruction and student attendance in lectures. Helping graduate students with their dissertations, and then follow their academic careers also gives joy, it’s uplifting. Of course, there’s also a downside – you realize how “senior” you have become!

What would you advise to the students who are planning to apply for a Fulbright grant or exploring other grants and scholarships?

This process has changed so much. There is so much more available now, and so many ways to contact universities like face to face interviews with faculty members before you apply. Contacts matter a lot. Universities need to learn more about student applicants. If you can provide more information about yourself, then it’s helpful. Get to know faculty members of universities and departments you want to go to. American universities will start recruiting with American students, whose background and skills they know well. It’s not the same for applicants from Turkey. Some programs in a few institutions in Turkey are well-known. For students from other programs and institutions, they have low input. So, if applicants are able to provide some input by having some personal contacts, they can change many things - favorably or unfavorably! Students who apply to American institutions for graduate studies should target not only a few star universities, but more universities. I believe exploiting the opportunities you get effectively is more important than going after a prestigious name. Social networking and keeping up good relations can lead you to joining international research projects. Of course, you also need to deliver!
American Programs

GENERAL INFORMATION

The American Programs Unit of our Commission provides a number of opportunities for Americans to come to Turkey for research, study and teaching purposes. Spanning a wide range of eligible disciplines and qualification levels, the American Programs Unit gives the citizens of the United States the chance to discover and learn more about Turkey. Turkish academic institutions are invited to host American scholars and students in conjunction with the Fulbright Program. Those interested can learn more at www.fulbright.org.tr or send an e-mail to amprog@fulbright.org.tr.

The grant programs currently included within the American Programs Unit are:

The U.S. Scholar Program provides a number of opportunities for academics and professionals to pursue research, teaching, and other relevant opportunities in Turkey. Senior Lecturer awards are granted for U.S. scholars/professionals to lecture at a Turkish host university. We are pleased to welcome three lecturers to Turkey this year through the Senior Lecturer component of the U.S. Scholar Program. Grantees will complete their grant periods at universities in Ankara, Istanbul and Izmir. Senior Research awards are given to support a scholar/professional in conducting research in partnership with a host institution. Two Senior Researchers are currently completing their grants in Turkey.

The Fulbright Specialist Program (FSP) is a component of the Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program which promotes collaboration between U.S. academics and professionals and their counterparts at host institutions overseas. This grant allows researchers and professionals in select disciplines to complete short-term grants related to specific projects with Turkish host institutions.

Applicants can also come to Turkey through the Global Scholar Program. This grant allows U.S. academics and professionals to engage in multi-country, trans-regional projects and enables them to pursue research or combined research/teaching opportunities. The grant can be used in a maximum of three countries with flexible scheduling.

U.S. Student Program:

The most well-known of the Fulbright Student grants are those designated for study and research. These nine-month long grants are open to applicants who have (or will have) completed their Bachelor’s Degree or to post-graduate degree candidates and developing professionals and artists. This year, we are pleased to welcome ten Student Study/Research grantees to three major Turkish cities: Ankara, Bursa and Istanbul.

We are also eager to welcome the first recipient of the Fulbright Greece-Turkey Joint Research Award, Mr. Daniel Steven Fields. Mr. Fields, a doctoral candidate in history at Princeton University, is currently spending the first half of his grant period in Greece, and will continue his grant at Sabanci University in Istanbul in the Spring term. We look forward to his arrival, and welcome this unique opportunity for student researchers to conduct multi-country research through this program. In recent years, Fulbright grantees have come to Turkey through special U.S. Student Program grants including the Fulbright-National Geographic Digital Storytelling Fellowship and the Fulbright-mtvU award.

The English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program, an element of the U.S. Student Program, offers recent college graduates and young professionals the opportunity to teach English at the university level in Turkey. ETA Program grant recipients come from a wide range of academic backgrounds, but share a firm commitment to the role of education and language learning in particular, as a path toward cultural exchange.
Senior Scholars’ and Student Researchers’ Orientation Meeting Program

On October 17-19, 2016, U.S. Scholar and Student grantees congregated in Ankara for an Orientation Meeting Program. The meeting included Senior Lecturer, Senior Researcher, and Student Research grantees who have come to Turkey from 11 different states in the U.S., with a wide range of academic backgrounds. During the meeting, grantees had the chance to hear presentations on many topics, including Turkish history, culture, and politics, as well as on the development of art and archaeology in Turkey. Grantees also toured some of the famous historical and cultural attractions in Ankara and had the opportunity to prepare logistically for the year ahead through consultations with the American Programs Unit at the Commission.

The Honorary Chairman of our Commission, U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Mr. John Bass and his wife Ms. Holly Holzer Bass graciously hosted the grantees for a welcoming reception at their residence prior to the grantees’ departure to their host cities. This academic year, U.S. Grantees will teach and conduct research at a variety of universities and institutions in Ankara, Bursa, Istanbul and İzmir.

Stories from U.S. Grantees

Dr. Shruti Singh Poulsen
2016-2017 U.S. Senior Lecturer
University of Colorado-Denver, Colorado / Özyeğin University, Istanbul

Turkey-day festivities in Turkey!

Being away from one’s home country can be a disorienting experience especially around the holidays that are typically celebrated back home. Thanksgiving was celebrated by millions of people back in the U.S., with lots of turkeys running for their lives, while here in Turkey our host country, there was hardly a ripple in the day-to-day routines of work and life. Somehow, though, we Fulbrighters managed to have much comradery, festivities, food, and opportunity for our own Thanksgiving fellowship. On the initiative of our Bursa colleague, Hamilton “Parker” Cook, we gathered at my apartment in Ümraniye on the Asian side of Istanbul on Friday, November 25th for a delightful gathering of fellowship and food. While the meal was not exactly the traditional fare of a typical U.S. Thanksgiving meal, we enjoyed several traditional dishes such as mashed potatoes, baked yams with marshmallows (made with actual Kraft marshmallows brought from the U.S.), and bread rolls. Roast chicken was the substitute for turkey (the bird!) and vegetable biryani a substitute for dressing. Alas, no gravy…

“We were all grateful for this, and thankful for Fulbright and the opportunities and support we are so fortunate to have.”
Superficially, my Fulbright project in Bursa seems entirely archival. At Bursa’s İnebey Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi (library), I am looking at the Qur’an commentary Ruh al-Bayan written by a famous Ottoman Sufi, Ismail Hakkı Bursevi, for my dissertation on his theories on human identity. Although the commentary has been published numerous times, all publications exclude Bursevi’s margin notes, leaving readers with half of the text. Thus, to understand the text in its entirety, it is imperative to read the work’s unedited marginalia, or its “con-text.” Analogously, I have found that by living and working in Bursa through the Fulbright Program, I have been able to access a kind of physical “con-text” of Bursevi’s work. For instance, Bursevi delivered his commentary in a series of lectures in Bursa’s well-known Ulu Camii (mosque). After every session, Bursevi walked home which was located on the northeast of the mosque to transcribe his lessons. Away from the prying eyes of Bursa’s religious authorities, Bursevi added supplementary notes, often radical in nature. I make this same walk from Ulu Camii to his grave when I finish my archival work. I notice how ideal the passage and his resting place might be for intimate meditations upon the Qur’an. Likewise, Bursevi often references Bursa landmarks in his commentary. He speaks of Bursa’s many scholars and saints, its greenery, and even the southwestern gusts for which Bursa is famous (Tr. lodos). Working with the modern day scholars of Bursa at Uludağ Üniversitesi, touring the tombs of Bursa’s many saints that Bursevi mentions, even being blown about by a famous Bursa lodos in the shade of Uludağ mountain, make certain comments come alive. Just like Bursevi who traveled in Anatolia frequently, I too travel to Istanbul to meet with professors and colleagues, visiting places significant to the Sufi author on the side. If I were isolated in an archive or in an American library, I could not have the connection with this 300-year-old work or its author. With a Fulbright Student Research grant, I have been given the unique opportunity to read Bursevi’s masterpiece in its most complete form, text and marginalia, and to experience it the fullness of its proper “con-text.”
“Tam Türk oldun ya!”, my roommate says as I leave to begin my day. I follow the usual path: pick up two peynirli poğaça (buns with cheese filling), chat with the stationery store worker and his friend (who has convinced himself and anyone who would listen, that I am Bobby Dixon, a basketball player for Fenerbahçe), and catch a bus towards Karaköy. After making my way through familiar winding streets - a left, another left, straight ahead, then right - I reach my destination, ask for a latte, and unload my tell-tale backpack of its various burdens: three pens, personal journal, daily journal, a spiraled notebook, a Turkish book, and finally, my laptop. I sit for about four to six hours reading and note taking, while doing the occasional millennial check of my various social media websites and RSS newsfeed. Eventually, I notice the time and make my way to the yoga studio to relax my mind (read: challenge, as the class is entirely in Turkish) and stare at something that isn’t a computer screen or my smartphone. A few downward facing dogs later, I’m homebound and my thoughts return back to my research, food, and the next day.

A generous part of my time in Turkey as a Fulbright research scholar could be typified in this manner, one of regularity, one of mundanity. Yet, in its simplicity, this routine is partly the reason why my roommate considers that I have become “completely Turkish.” My life in Istanbul has become one that’s lived in technicolor Türknicolor: I have my favorite coffee spots in Cihangir, hang out and drink tea in Karaköy, breakfast in Emirgan or Beşiktaş, choose the side streets of İstiklal Caddesi over its more familiar road filled with shops, and travel to cities that aren’t on the usual foreigner’s bucket-list. This regularity has generated close friendships with the coffee shop workers, owners, yogis, and fellow patrons who I see every day. These people are not just ones who served coffee or corrected my foot positions - they were my colleagues over the year. I do not mean this in the traditional sense of someone you work with in a professional setting. Instead, I found them as colleagues for the countless times they have indulged in the development of my research, found a moment to translate a sentence or idiom between coffee orders, or listen to my frustrations with research. For allowing these distractions to their life and work, I will forever be indebted to them.

Distractions - that might be quite the word to describe the process for someone who is fairly new to “research.” Typically, distractions might be assumed to have a negative connotation, especially as most of lives we are required to focus on a duty at hand. However, it is only through those things that might be called “distractions”, that I found my research topic - the history of black slave trade in the Ottoman Empire and AfroTurks. Actively pursuing this new route eventually brought me to İzmir and in the presence of Mustafa Olpak, the head of the AfroTurk Association and main reason why Dana Bayrami (the Calf Festival) will take place once more in İzmir.

More than likely, most of us began this journey with quite the list of goals and desired accomplishments. Mine was quite ambitious - read over a hundred books, begin and finish my thesis, master Turkish, find the perfect Ph.D. program or career path, and come back with a killer physique! Now, as my time as a Fulbright researcher quickly draws to a close, I realize that that list was never quite attainable over the course of a year. My research leaves me with more questions than I have answers. And that’s okay, because Fulbright is not just a research experience, but a path that eventually revolutionizes your life. It has certainly left many distractions in mine.
Stories from ETA Grantees

Ms. Hogai Aryoubi
2015-2016 ETA Program Grantee
Johns Hopkins University, Maryland – George Mason University, Virginia / Sakarya University, Sakarya

“The ETA grant has been an important cultural, academic and professional experience for me.”

The Fulbright ETA grant has provided me with an academic and cultural exchange with my host university in Sakarya. I was able to research art integration in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) curricula to see potential benefits in student’s language listening skills. The director of the foreign language department and I co-published an academic article on the research and outcome. The article was my first published piece and was vital in my application and admissions to my doctoral study at the University of Cambridge. My students were able to learn about American music on a daily basis through the research and end up with the highest listening scores in the department. I was also able to learn about Turkish music from my students and have attended two Turkish concerts during my time in Turkey. I have a high level appreciation for Turkish music and hope my students enjoy American music as well. The ETA grant has been an important cultural, academic and professional experience for me.

Ms. Allison Weidemann
2015-2016 ETA Program Grantee
Arizona State University, Arizona / Amasya University, Amasya

“Recital in Amasya”

“Is there a piano anywhere on campus?” A few months into my Fulbright ETA year in Amasya, Turkey, I began to ask the question more frequently. I was grateful to have the guitar a colleague had lent me the first week I arrived, but I longed to play the piano. A few faculty told me about a music professor, Fikret Hoca. Having only low-intermediate Turkish under my belt, I was grateful when a fellow English teacher, Rasim Hoca, offered to make the introduction. Fikret Hoca welcomed us into his office, where the piano and a few students were, and motioned for me to play. Any reservation about putting rusty fingers to keys in front of strangers was outweighed by exhilaration. I played one classical piece after another, hardly noticing the soft chatter in Turkish behind me, until I paused and turned. “Fikret Hoca has offered to make a copy of the key to his office so that you may come practice whenever you like,” Rasim Hoca translated. “And this student here, who is the president of the student music club, would like you to be the featured performer on their spring concert.” I was shocked, honored, and grateful. On May 11, 2016, I performed a 45-minute concert of pieces ranging from Bach to Gershwin to a composition of my own, and was presented a certificate of recognition from the university. It was an incredible moment—looking out over the audience of Turkish students, faculty, and friends who had spent the last 8 months welcoming me, teaching me, and learning from me.
The Turkish Student Core Program

For Turkish graduate students and graduating seniors, the Fulbright Student Program provides support towards their master’s and PhD degrees.

Selected nominees for the 2017-2018 academic year have already begun their application and placement process to U.S. institutions. At present, they are applying to programs in 26 different disciplinary fields.

In addition, the Commission has opened a separate competition for the 2017-2018 Visiting Student Researcher Program applicants.

Addition of Two New Grants in Turkish Programs

Our Commission observes and identifies the needs of the Turkish higher education system. As a result, we sometimes launch new grant programs or make changes in the existing ones. In 2016, we launched the Fulbright Postdoctoral Program, in which young scholars are able to conduct research in their academic fields in the U.S. The emergence of this Program has fulfilled its purpose by addressing the needs and expectations of young scholars, who were otherwise competing against more experienced senior scholars for limited grant positions. The first few Fulbright Postdoctoral Program grantees will start their research activities in the U.S. in the Fall of 2017.

Another new grant program launched by our Commission will be “The Fulbright Turkey Award in Biophysics and Biochemistry in Honor of Professor Aziz Sancar”. This new grant program is designed in collaboration with Nobel Laureate Professor Sancar and the selected grantee will start his/her studies at Prof. Sancar’s home institution, the University of North Carolina in the 2018-2019 academic year.
Stories from Our Turkish Fulbright Grantees

Diren Kocakuşak
2016-2017 Ph.D. Program Grantee
Middle East Technical University, Ankara / Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Grandness of the Fulbright Network

I experienced the grandness of the Fulbright Network before I moved to the United States. After I was admitted to the Ph.D. program at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, coordinators of the program created a group in one of the social media websites for the prospective graduate students for the upcoming year. In that group, I met another Fulbright grantee (ETA Program), who was an English Instructor at Bulent Ecevit University in Zonguldak and starting her Master’s Degree at the same program with me. Also, she completed her Bachelor’s degree at Rutgers and hence, she knew the city and had a lot of friends there. It was comforting to know someone before starting a completely new life in a city to which I had never been before.

She was so helpful initially, and after I moved to New Brunswick, New Jersey, I was able to meet a lot of people thanks to her. Since she had such a good experience in Turkey, we have a lot in common to talk about when we have time to meet. Indeed, it was unexpected for me to see Nazım Hikmet poems and Deniz Gezmiş stickers on the fridge in her house which is 5000 miles away from Turkey. It literally felt like home, when I first saw that.

I consider myself lucky to know her because of all of the support she gave me before I moved here. This is a testament to the Fulbright network.

“I experienced the grandness of the Fulbright Network before I moved to United States.”

Ekin Levent
2016-2017 Master’s Program Grantee
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, Ankara / The University of Texas at Austin

As an MFA student living in Austin, it would have gone against the nature of the city if I didn’t attend a festival. After all the slogan is “Live Music Capital of the World” and the Austin City Limits Music Festival, known as ACL, is a big part of that. The festival takes place at Zilker Park for two consecutive weekends with more than 100 artists performing. I decided to attend the first weekend, getting excited for a chance to listen to Flume.

However, instead of attending the usual way (buying a ticket), I applied to volunteer. Most of the festivals in Austin have volunteering opportunities that allow students to participate in world famous events and ACL is among them. Merging
its power with the Love Hope Strength Foundation, festival aimed to enthuse young people to ‘get on the list’ for bone marrow donation. My part as a volunteer was filling up the water bottles at Hydration Station. Although festival was taking place in October, we were still living in summer temperature and hydration meant a lot for Austinites.

Before we split into groups, we met at LHSF headquarters tent for 3 days and that is where I met Andrea. She was one of the group leaders and after I told her where I am from, she just started speaking in Turkish. That was the first time I heard my language spoken by a non-native person that well. As we continued talking, I learned that she lived and worked in İzmir for a couple of years. It felt so strange and good at the same time, talking about home at a festival while homesickness was slowly rising. At first, she started with basic words, but then as we talked, Andrea said that she forgot a lot but that talking helped her remember.

Before the first week ended, we exchanged our contact information for a future meeting. Amazed how small and surprising the world is, as I walked to my apartment at the end of third day, I was happy and grateful for the coincidence, experience and music.

“\nThat was the first time I heard my language spoken by a non-native person that well.\n”

Nevin Durmaz

2016-2017 Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program Grantee
Doğuş University, İstanbul / Indiana University, Bloomington

Bloomington is home to Indiana University. It is a small university town surrounded by woods, beautiful lakes and small neighborhoods. After moving from a big city, İstanbul, coming to a small town scared me at the beginning. I wondered whether I would get bored here during my stay. However, later on, I have started discovering the advantages of living in a tiny town. Going to school on foot without worrying about public transportation schedules, not being exposed to heavy traffic and noise disturbance, breathing fresh air each time as hearing your heart’s beat became really delightful in time. Then I realized that with the bike lanes Bloomington was offering me a great opportunity. In my life, I always wanted to work somewhere I could bike! However, it never seemed possible in such a big city like İstanbul. But Bloomington was a great place to bike everywhere! So, after a very short while, I started searching to buy a new bike. I was looking for one which would not be pricey for me as I was on a limited budget. Then I came across a local cooperative called “Bloomington Community Bike Project”. Here, the idea was getting the city of Bloomington moving by recycling bicycles back into the community. After searching about them a little bit more, I learned about Earn-a-Bike program. This program

“In the end, I had a wonderful recycled bike, met beautiful people and had precious experience. What else could anyone want?”

“\nIn the end, I had a wonderful recycled bike, met beautiful people and had precious experience. What else could anyone want?\n”
allows anyone to volunteer three hours of their time for the opportunity to build their own bike using project’s gently used frames and parts for free. Eventually, I went there, volunteered for three hours of work; in the end, got a recycled bike for a very reasonable price. While building my own bike, I learned a lot of things about bikes which was something precious for me. In the end, I had a wonderful recycled bike, met beautiful people and had precious experience. What else could anyone want? I could not ask for more. Now, I ride my bike everywhere enjoying being in Bloomington!

Betül Kınık
2016-2017 Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program Grantee
Gazi University, Ankara / The University of Arizona

Have you ever wanted something so much, but did not act upon it, because you thought the timing was not right? Even though being in the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship (FLTA) Program has always been my dream since my first year at college, I waited for a long time to apply, and I have regretted a lot for that. I have been an FLTA for nearly three months and have quite literally experienced the “immodest aim” of the Fulbright via improving my teaching skills, meeting great people, establishing amazing friendships, and experiencing the feeling of global citizenship.

I want to briefly talk about what I have done and will do in the University of Arizona in Tucson to share my own culture. As a great fan of Turkish food, I have been very glad when my students and the people around me have been talking about Turkish food in a very pleasant way since I came to the U.S.A. Following what Cemal Süreya has said, “I don’t know what you think of eating, but breakfast must have a connection with happiness!” we organized “Turkish Breakfast” on November 5, and had a really great time. We had our current students, former students of Turkish classes, international scholars from different departments as guests. Our students were already familiar with the concept of typical Turkish breakfast, as we talked about it in the classroom. In the breakfast, they did not just enjoy the delicious food, but they all tried to talk in Turkish as soon as they stepped to the breakfast place. What can be greater for a teacher than seeing her students trying to speak in the language she has been teaching just for two months? But breakfast must have a connection with happiness!”

What can be greater for a teacher than seeing her students trying to speak in the language she has been teaching just for two months?
The New Me

People say new beginnings bring about a new you. It is quite true. You don’t realize it until you experience it. Before coming here, I knew enough about the American culture, or so I believed. When I first saw Iowa I asked myself “what is this?” because the city looked vast and green. I am from Istanbul which is one of the most populated cities in the world. There was no attraction in Iowa as I expected. You expect more people and more buildings when you are from a big city. I was scared at the beginning. Infinitive corn fields, all green and not even a big downtown. Time passed slowly, I started to observe things and culture in a way that I never experienced. People were really nice to me. People were saying “good morning” or “how are you?” when I was walking down the street even though I have never talked with them before. It really helped me to get used to the place. American culture has big differences when compared to Turkish culture. Now I look at a situation in two different ways. I criticize it with two different perspectives. Some of the things you decide to do might not be the same as you would do in your home country. I learned and am still learning; this opportunity to experience a new country and culture showed me that we are closer than we think. The biggest thing I learned is that we are actually one and there is only one world. Our differences makes us who we are, and differences makes us unique. I love it.
After having been informed that I was awarded with the Fulbright Scholar Program to conduct my research at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), I was very excited about going to Boston, where MIT is located. It was a few months prior to our trip when we (my wife Esra and I) started to make plans about our accommodation in Boston as well as our needs in the first phase of our move. In order to reduce the effects of a possible cultural shock, we were also very enthusiastic about getting information related to the social and cultural life and natural environment in Boston. Since one of the most efficient ways of getting information in such cases is to ask someone who had lived there before, we listened to our friends’ experiences about Boston. After having learned much about Boston, we came to the conclusion that we would have a good time there. One of the common ideas of those people to whom we asked about Boston was that we were very lucky since we would have the chance of experiencing “Fall Foliage” which comes true in October and November. After a short web search, we learned that “Fall Foliage” is a term about the leaves of trees, which take on various shades of red, yellow, purple and orange in fall. Furthermore, New England (the geographical region which covers six states in the North East of the USA, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont) is the area in which most of the trees produce the pigment called anthocyanins that provides wonderful leaf colors specifically in fall. Then, we were sure that we would have a beautiful and colorful fall in Boston. Fortunately, we were not mistaken about this belief. We were mesmerized by the beauty of the scenes in Boston and around, and were amazed of the power of the nature every time we face with the pastel colors of red and yellow in the forests.

We took several photos at the “Fall Foliage and Apple Festival Excursion” jointly organized by Fulbright and World Boston at the Wachusett Mountain and at the “Boston Common Park” which is probably the most quiet and relaxing place in Boston.
EducationUSA Forum 2016

The EducationUSA Forum, which is the signature event of EducationUSA, was held between August 2-4, 2016 in Washington D.C. The Forum is designed to bring together international admission and enrollment management professionals at U.S. colleges, universities, higher education institutions and EducationUSA advisers and Regional Educational Advising Coordinators (REACs) from around the world. At this year’s Forum, there were 49 advisers from 47 countries as well as all 13 REACs. The REACs were the moderators during the sessions, which were designed to give an overview of their regions.

Our Advising Coordinator, Bahar Deniz Türkaslan, represented Turkey at the Forum and she was one of the presenters at the Europe and Eurasia Regional Overview sessions, which attracted a lot of interest from the participants.

This year’s Forum, like the previous Forums, involved a lot of interaction between the U.S. higher education institution representatives and the EducationUSA Program Officers, REACs and the EducationUSA Advisers.

Meeting with Dr. Jill Biden

Dr. Jill Biden, former 2nd lady of the United States, was the plenary speaker at this year’s Forum. Before her speech, she met with a small group of EducationUSA advisers among whom was our Advising Coordinator, Bahar Deniz Türkaslan, and she had the chance to explain to Dr. Biden the positive impact that studying in the USA has on Turkish students.

REAC Visit

Ms. Cheryl Francisconi is the new REAC for Turkey, and she paid a visit to our Ankara office on December 12, 2016. She had a meeting with our Executive Director and Advising Coordinator, which was really fruitful in terms of strengthening the EducationUSA advising services provided to those Turkish students who would like to study in the United States.
EducationUSA Advising Strategy Planning Meeting

This meeting was held at the residence of the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, Ankara on December 13, 2016 with the participation of all the parties involved in EducationUSA advising in Turkey. One of the main goals of this meeting was to discuss effective ways to build a strong team for EducationUSA in Turkey so that we can reach out to more individuals who are interested in studying in the United States.

Campus Visits in Upstate New York

Following the Forum, our Advising Coordinator visited SUNY Binghamton, SUNY Broome and Cornell University campuses with advisers from other countries. The campus visits were very well-planned and informative. The university representatives provided a lot of information about their programs, services for their international students, scholarship opportunities and admissions processes.
The 1st Virtual Student Recruitment Fair

This virtual fair was organized by Mezun and İSE World in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy Ankara, U.S. Consulate Istanbul, Fulbright Turkey and EducationUSA. The fair sites were Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul, TED University in Ankara, Yaşar University in İzmir and Gündoğdu Koleji in Adana. At the beginning of the fair the U.S. Ambassador to Turkey Mr. John Bass’s videotaped remarks were shared with the participants. After the Ambassador’s speech, the Commission made presentations in Istanbul and Ankara on EducationUSA’s 5 Steps to U.S. Study and Fulbright scholarships for college students. Following our presentations, the virtual part of the fair was opened and the participants could interact with the representatives of U.S. higher education institutions which had virtual booths.

Outreach Visits

Our advising team started visiting high schools and universities to inform students about higher education opportunities in the U.S.A. and Fulbright scholarships. They have so far visited two high schools and 20 vocational schools at universities not only in Ankara and Istanbul but also in other cities such as İzmir, Bursa, Konya, Nevşehir and Eskişehir. These visits will continue in the Spring Term.
The Turkish Fulbright Commission in Numbers

Number of Awarded Grants according to Grant Categories between 1951-2016

Registered Turkish alumni number is 3,196.

**Exchange Programs** include Teacher Exchange, Administrative Exchange Programs and Collaborative Lecturing Programs

***Visiting Programs** include Visiting Specialist, Aegean Initiative, American Studies, Community Initiative, CENTO and Travel Grants
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