

Fulbright Grant: Sample C

Curriculum Vitae

When I was studying in Simferopol, Ukraine, I would walk for one hour four times a week along the muddy, broken sidewalks lined with garbage, abandoned animals, old women, and homeless children to the small, dark apartment building where I taught conversational English to a group of about 10 students. Although none of my students had ever been outside of the Ukraine, they did not accept that life as they knew it was all that they would ever get, as most of the older generation had done. These students do not have internet, do not have international television, and in general have little or no exposure to life outside the strict borders of the Ukraine. When I met with these students in class, however, I knew that their study of English was more than just an after-school activity. For them, learning English was a footstep into a new, more global world. The students ranged from professors at the Crimean Medical Institute to teenagers who would travel an hour by bus from their little farming village to attend class. But they all shared one common aim: to be part an international community.

As their teacher in this situation, I realized that my job was to teach English, but also to be an ambassador of today's international world. I was teaching English, but teaching it with a goal of breaking down barriers between people and cultures, and I was inspired by my class. For me, teaching English as a Foreign Language is important for many reasons such as this one, but also because it is my chance to give to the rest of the world what the world has given me. I have studied German, French, Spanish, Japanese, Russian, and Korean at some point from native speakers, and each time that I have been given the chance to interact with these native speakers and see a glimpse of the world from their perspective, I am inspired to learn more.

I grew up in a small logging town of predominately Caucasian people with little experience outside of the United States. When I was in sixth grade, a special visitor from our city's sister-city in Japan came to our class once a week to talk about Japan and teach beginning Japanese. Through this I learned about our sister-city program, and by my freshman year in high school my family had hosted three Japanese students from our sister-city and I had lived with a homestay in Japan. This was the beginning of my fascination with the world, which continued through high school, where I simultaneously studied French, German, and Spanish, and hosted a German student for an academic year. Once in college, I had the opportunity to more fully realize that my passion for international affairs and foreign languages could not only present me with great opportunities, but could be useful in the world. I began volunteering as a Russian instructor at a shelter which housed many Russians alongside Americans; working as an ESL tutor for Japanese exchange students at my university; mentoring Russian students at a local middle-school; helping teach Sunday school at a local Korean Church; and living in the Ukraine for 10 months, studying, researching, and teaching English. These experiences have all changed who I am, and they have strengthened my desire to help others have the opportunities which I have had.

I have learned that I am at my best when dealing with issues of cross-cultural communication and understanding, and although I am not yet sure where I am headed in the future, I am certain that it will be related to this field that I love. I plan to pursue a graduate degree in conflict resolution or international relations, after which I will find other ways to grow and make positive changes in the world.