

Fashionably Fulbright

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

Four members of the JMU community, including two professors, a graduate student and an alumna, have recently joined the ranks of distinguished scholars known as Fulbrights.

The U.S. Congress created the national Fulbright Program in 1946 after Senator J. William Fulbright proposed its legislation. The program offers competitive grants for foreign study, research and teaching experiences to allow people to gain international understanding by exploring different cultures. The program's goals also include increasing mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries, through the exchange of persons, knowledge and skills.

JMU Political science professor Elizabeth A.E. Garbrah-Aidoo received a Fulbright Scholar Award to teach in Egypt during the 1999-2000 academic year. Garbrah-Aidoo has served on the faculty since 1995 and is a specialist in comparative public policy, the agenda setting process, social welfare policy, health-care policies, Affirmative Action and environmental policies. Upon arriving in Egypt last fall, she was assigned to teach in Cairo by Egypt's Binational Fulbright Commission.

Before coming to JMU, Garbrah-Aidoo taught at Tuskegee University in Alabama and the University of Houston in Texas. She was also a visiting professor at the University of South Carolina in 1993-94. She earned a bachelor's degree in agriculture from the University of Science and Technology in Ghana and an M.B.A. from LaGrange College in Georgia. She earned master's and doctoral degrees in political science at the University of Houston.

Alumna Carmen Gillespi, who teaches English at Mary Washington College, received a 1997 Fulbright Grant to teach one semester at the University of the West Indies in Barbados. Instead of filing away her experience in scrap books, Gillespi created a six-week "Barbados Project" at Mary Washington, which attracted 20 students from various Virginia colleges last summer.

"Thanks to the Fulbright program I found it easier to make contacts that helped mold this cultural study program," says Gillespi. Her Barbados Project allows students to delve deeply into the rich blend of British and West African cultures in Barbados, as well as study the legacy of slavery and post colonialism. Students also experience the "Crop Over," a native festival which celebrates the end of the sugar cane harvest and has origins dating to the 1780s.

Gillespi says she has seen similar Barbados programs offered at Stanford University and Berkeley, but she attributes her project's first-year success to her Fulbright experience. "I would not have been able to incorporate as much into this program without firsthand experience. We plan to offer our Barbados studies again this summer."

Gillespi earned her Ph.D. from Emory University in 1992 and graduated from JMU with her bachelor's in 1987 and a master's in 1988.

Music composition professor John Hilliard used his Senior Fulbright Scholarship to teach and conduct research at Hong Kong Baptist University for 10 months during the 1998-99 academic year. He taught graduate-level composers at the university's department of music and completed research to use in the composition of a mass for chorus and orchestra. He also worked with several established Chinese composers and teachers in the study of traditional and contemporary Chinese music.

While in Hong Kong, Hilliard also worked on two commissions for the year 2000: a work for NEWEAR, a Kansas City contemporary music ensemble, and a piano composition for the JMU Wind Symphony. The JMU piece will be premiered during the spring 2000 Contemporary Music Festival, an event Hilliard annually co-chairs.

Hilliard has served on the JMU faculty since 1988. He was one of two composers requested to write music for the 1993 inauguration of President Clinton. In 1995, he was given a six-month residency grant as an artistic fellow for the Japan Foundation in Tokyo, where he studied traditional Japanese music and composed works in eastern and western styles. In 1997, his second symphony was premiered by the Danville Illinois Symphony Orchestra. Hilliard earned his bachelor of music degree Quachita University. He earned his master's in composition from Virginia Commonwealth University and his doctorate from

Cornell.

Graduate student Matthew Parker is using his 1999-2000 Fulbright Foreign Scholarship to draw and write about the people of India. He is completing his nine-month stay during the spring semester while he sketches the people, animals and landscape of India in pen, ink, pencil and watercolor. "My sketches and writings will be like a journal," said Parker. "I hope to finish about 300 pages and get a complete view of the country. I have never traveled overseas, and this will give me the chance to do things on my own, not like a tourist. This will be a very independent and rewarding experience."

Parker earned his bachelor of fine arts from the Art Institute of Chicago in May 1998.

The Fulbright Program is primarily funded by an annual appropriation by the U.S. Information Agency (USIA). Participating governments and host institutions also contribute financial support through direct cost sharing, tuition waivers and university housing. USIA is the principal administrator of the worldwide Fulbright Program and answers to U.S. Congress on matters relating to the program's funding, recruitment, placements and administration in 141 countries.

With guidance from the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FSB), the USIA administers the program in cooperation with binational Fulbright commissions and foundations. The FSB is composed of twelve educational leaders, who are appointed by the president of the United States, and who oversee the program, establish policies and selection criteria, and select grantees for awards.

Story by Michelle Hite ('88)