

## Overview of U.S. Education and the Fulbright Program 5 September, 2001

I was asked to provide a brief overview U.S. education system in colleges and universities by explaining the grading system, distinguishing between colleges versus universities, and commenting on degrees offered and faculty positions. In addition, I was asked to describe the Fulbright Program. Below is a brief summary of each point.

### Grading System

Similar to the Russian system for grading, numbers as assigned to letter grades. However, the two systems are on different scales. The Russian system ranges from 5 to 1 with 5 being excellent, 4 good, 3 fair, 2, bad, and 1 not tested. A 4.0 scale is used in the United States with 4 being excellent, 3 above average, 2 average, 1 below average, and 0 fail. Schools that use the plus/minus system subtract .3 for a minus grade and add .3 for a plus grade (many schools, however, do not offer an A+).

Straight 4.0 Scale			+/- Scale		
Grade	Percentage	GPA	Grade	Percentage	GPA
A	> 90%	4.0	A	> 92.5%	4.0
B	80% - 89%	3.0	A-	90% - 92.5%	3.7
C	70% - 79%	2.0	B+	87.5% - 90%	3.3
D	60% - 69%	1.0	B	82.5% - 87.5%	3.0
F	< 60%	0.0	B-	80% - 82.5%	2.7
			C+	77.5% - 80%	2.3
			C	72.5% - 77.5%	2.0
			C-	70% - 72.5%	1.7
			D+	67.5% - 70%	1.3
			D	62.5% - 67.5%	1.0
			D-	60% - 62.5%	0.7
			F	< 60%	0.0

The numbers assigned to the letter grades are used to determine the grade point average (GPA). The GPA is used as an overall indicator of academic performance. Instead of counting the number of 4's for determining who graduates with distinction as in the Russian system, the GPA is used to determine who graduates with honors. There are a number of ways students can graduate with distinction in the United States. First, students can graduate summa cum laude, magna cum laude, or cum laude. However, the criteria for establishing these honors can vary from school to school. For instance, some schools assign summa cum laude status to students with GPAs of 3.9 to 4.0 while others use a percentage cutoff so that no more than 4-5% of students graduate summa cum laude. Second, students who successfully complete an honors program of a particular school may graduate with honors or distinction. Whether or not a school has an honors program varies across institutions. Finally, a student may graduate with special recognition if they are members of a honor society. Honor society membership is based on GPA and class standing.

Example on a Straight 4.0 Scale:

Course	Credits	Grade		
Statistics	3	B	3	9
Sensation & Perception	3	B	3	9
S & P Lab	1	A	4	4
Social Psychology	3	A	4	12
<i>Russian Literature</i>	3	A	4	12
Raquetball	1	C	2	2
Nutrition	2	B	3	6
	16			54
				<b>3.375</b>

Example on a +/- Scale:

<b>Course</b>	<b>Credits</b>	<b>Grade</b>		
Statistics	3	B-	2.7	8.1
Sensation & Perception	3	B+	3.3	9.9
S & P Lab	1	A	4	4
Social Psychology	3	A-	3.7	11.1
<i>Russian Literature</i>	3	A	4	12
Raquetball	1	C+	2.3	2.3
Nutrition	<u>2</u>	B	3	<u>6</u>
	16			53.4
				<b>3.338</b>

### College v. University

Traditionally, the difference between a college and a university is that a university offers graduate degrees, particularly doctoral degrees, while a college does not. Another practical difference is that universities are generally much larger than colleges although there is no size criteria for differentiating between a university and college.

### Academic Degrees

*Associate Degrees* – two year degrees; usually offered at community colleges

*Bachelors of Arts* – four year undergraduate degree; traditionally requires language proficiency (two years plus exam)

*Bachelors of Science* – four year undergraduate degree; credit hours not used for language are used in science

*Masters Degrees* – Masters degrees in a variety of areas; in psychology they are generally in counseling, school counseling, school psychology, marriage and family counseling, social work; also MBA, MAT, M.Ed.

*Doctoral Degrees* – Ph.D., Psy.D., J.D., Ed.D.

*Medical School* – M.D.

### Faculty Positions

In exceptional cases, a masters level candidate will be hired to teach at a four-year institution. However, the rule is that a Ph.D. is required for an academic position. Assistant professor is the entry-level faculty position. After five years, a faculty member can apply for promotion to associate professor. The review process generally involves providing a comprehensive record of accomplishments, an interview, and essays. The final decision about promotion is based on levels of scholarship, teaching, and service. Although the weights of these areas change somewhat from school to school, scholarship and teaching tend to be the most important factors. After ten years, a faculty member is eligible for full professor. The process for advancing to full professor is similar to that of becoming an associate professor.

### Fulbright Program

The Fulbright Program was established in 1946 through legislation introduced by former Senator J. William Fulbright (AK). The program is designed to “increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...” Approximately 88,000 “Fulbrighters” from the United States and 146,000 from other countries have participated in the program since it started.

Each year about 800 faculty and professionals from around the world receive Fulbright scholar grants for advanced research and university lecturing in the United States. These scholars apply for grants through the Fulbright commission/foundation or public affairs section of the U.S. embassy in their home countries. CIES affiliates visiting scholars and provides assistance to them during their stays in the United States.

There is a Fulbright office in Russia. The Director is Joseph McCormick (jmccor@fulbright.amc.ru) and the Program Officer for Russian Fulbright grantees is Vitalia Haritonova (vvhkar@fulbright.mac.ru). Information about the visiting scholars program can also be found online at [www.iie.org/cies/](http://www.iie.org/cies/).

#### Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program

This program is designed for mid-career professionals from countries in various stages of development to the United States for a year of professional development and academic work at the graduate level. Grants are awarded in areas of social and public policy. (<http://exchanges.state.gov>)

#### The Study of the U.S. Program

This program is designed to promote a better understanding of the institutions of American society and culture, past and present, among scholars and teachers of American studies outside the United States. The program is presented in the summer through a series of American Studies Institutes which last six weeks and provide study (four weeks) and travel (two weeks) for multi-national groups of school and university faculty from abroad. (<http://exchanges.state.gov>)

#### Hints for Applying to University Linkages Programs (U.S. Department of State):

- Choose your partner institution carefully.
- Name a strong project director on each side.
- Lay as much of the ground work for your relationship as you can before you submit your proposal.
- Clearly define project objectives and the responsibilities of all partnership institutions during the initial stages of the proposal.
- Make sure that you show that your partner understands you and that you understand your partner.
- Do not confuse your objectives with the means for achieving them.
- Establish a clear understanding of the requirements of the competition through a careful reading of the soliciting documents.
- Thoroughly describe the benefits of each partnership institution and for the project as a whole in your proposal.
- Write to audiences of foreign affairs professionals and independent academic and professional reviewers.
- Consult with your university grants office.
- Gain the support of your institution's top administrative people early in the planning process.
- Talk to others who have participated in an institutional linkages program.
- Involve an outsider in proposal evaluation.
- Do some project cost-sharing, even if your institution is not wealthy.
- Address diversity issues substantively.
- Do not give up if you do not succeed the first time you try.