



Evaluation of the Impact of the Fulbright FLTA Program

*Conducted by
Goodman Research Group, Inc.*

*Submitted to
Institute of International Education*

*Sponsored by
The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and
Cultural Affairs*

August 2016



Introduction

The Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program is a U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)-sponsored program that aims to strengthen foreign language instruction by providing U.S. post-secondary accredited educational institutions with a native language speaker. The program is a two-way educational and cultural exchange, supporting American students learning first-hand about the language and culture of their FLTA, while the FLTA learns about American culture, improves his or her English language skills, and engages in coursework predominately focused on teaching methodology or U. S. studies. The Fulbright FLTA program has been administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE) since 1968.

Fulbright FLTAs come from Europe, the Western Hemisphere, Sub Saharan Africa, Southeast and South Central Asia, East Asia and the Pacific, the Middle East and North Africa. As participants in the program they engage in the prescribed course of study, which is two courses per semester (or one per quarter) with up to 20 hours per week of teaching assistant duties. Additionally, they act as cultural ambassadors, sharing their customs and traditions on and outside of their U.S. campuses. FLTAs are typically early career educators, ranging in age from their early twenties to their early thirties, with educational or professional backgrounds in English language teaching.

IIE contracted with Goodman Research Group, Inc. (GRG) in late 2015 to conduct a retrospective, cross-sectional study of the FLTA program's impact, including online surveys of U.S. students taught by a Fulbright FLTA (in the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 years), and FLTA alumni and U.S. host institution supervisors (in the years 2010-2011 through 2014-2015). The surveys were conducted between November, 2015 and March, 2016. A total of 927 students from 104 different U.S. institutions responded to the student survey; 795 alumni responded to the alumni survey (42% response rate); and 259 supervisors from 189 institutions responded to the host institution survey (35% response rate for supervisors, 51% response rate for institutions).

This report synthesizes and highlights the key findings of all three surveys regarding the impact of the FLTA program. Individual reports on each survey have been submitted previously and present survey methods, profiles of respondents, and additional findings on participants' experiences with and reflections on the program.

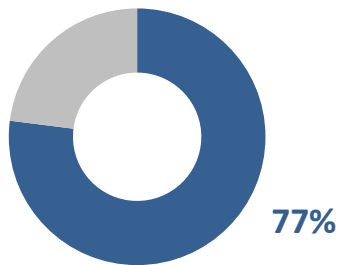
This report is organized as follows:

- Impact on U.S. Students
 - Foreign language skills
 - Plans to continue foreign language study
 - Intercultural development
- Impact on FLTAs
 - Intercultural development and knowledge of American culture
 - Professional development and pursuits
 - English language fluency
- Impact on Host Institutions
 - Language department scope and teaching capacity
- Impact on FLTA Program
 - Likelihood of promoting or continuing with the FLTA program

Impact on U.S. Students

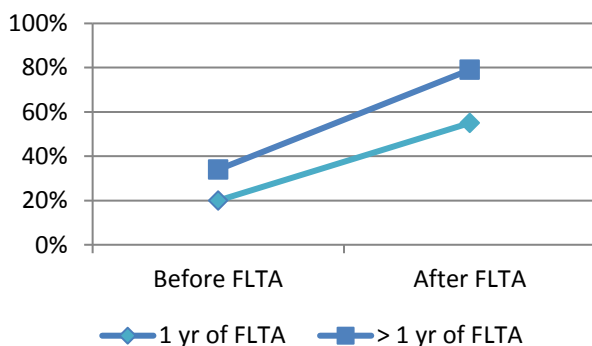
FLTAs teach an estimated 11,532 U.S. students annually.

Figure 1: Improved foreign language skill level



“Before taking the class with the FLTA, I had been learning with a friend for a couple of years, and then on my own for a couple of years. The class helped me focus, and figure out what I needed to do to learn effectively on my own, and in a classroom setting. My teacher’s use of the language, and her grammar lessons have greatly enhanced my understanding of the language.”

FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF U.S. STUDENTS AT INTERMEDIATE LEVEL OR HIGHER BY YEARS OF STUDY WITH FLTA



Foreign language skills

One of the most important goals of the Fulbright FLTA program is to improve U.S. students’ foreign language abilities. In addition to their teaching, FLTAs organize various additional activities that help achieve this goal. These include tutoring, language tables (and labs, clubs, and houses), and community lectures.

Data Highlights

- 88 percent of students agreed that studying with an FLTA enhanced their ability to communicate in the FLTA’s language.
- This was confirmed by 90 percent of host institution respondents who had noticed an increase on their campus over the last five years in students’ ability to communicate in the FLTA’s language that they attributed to their institution’s participation in the FLTA program.
- 77 percent of students increased their foreign language skills by at least one level (e.g., Beginner to Elementary) after having studied with an FLTA. See Figure 1.
- When taking into account baseline skill, foreign language skill *after* having studied with an FLTA was higher among:
 - Students whose FLTAs were from the Western Hemisphere and South/Central Asia
 - Students who had studied with an FLTA for more than one year (see Figure 2)
 - Students with greater participation in FLTA-led teaching activities (e.g., tutoring, language tables community lectures)

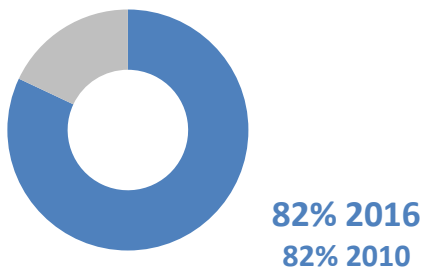
Impact on U.S. Students

“The only reason I would want to continue my study of Spanish is because of my interaction with the FLTA. Were it not for her, I would not even consider continuing my study in Spanish.”

Plans to continue foreign language study

Another goal of the Fulbright FLTA program is to motivate U.S. students to continue their foreign language study. There are a variety of ways in which students might continue studying their foreign language, including participating in conversation in the language, studying on their own through books and self-tutoring, enrolling in a course at their own or another university, participating in study abroad programs, maintaining contact with their FLTA, and through private lessons or tutors.

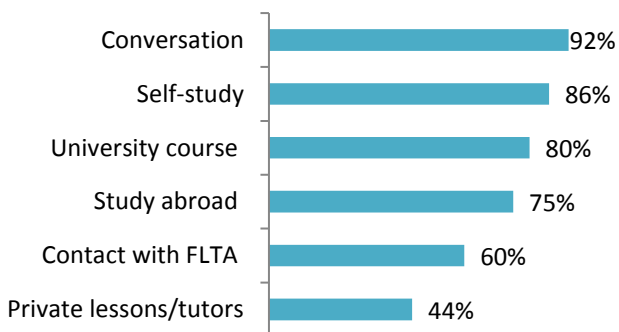
Figure 3: Influenced plans to continue foreign language study



Data Highlights

- 82 percent of U.S. students were influenced by their FLTA experience to continue studying the foreign language they had studied with their most recent FLTA. See Figure 3.
- This outcome was more prevalent among:
 - Southern and Midwestern university students
 - LCTL students
 - Foreign language majors or minors
 - Students whose foreign language skills were advanced
- Among students who planned to continue their study, 80 percent planned to enroll in a course at their own or another university. See Figure 4. This is impressive given the overall decline in undergraduate student enrollment in foreign language courses in the U.S.¹

FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF U.S. STUDENTS PLANNING TO CONTINUE FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY IN VARIOUS WAYS



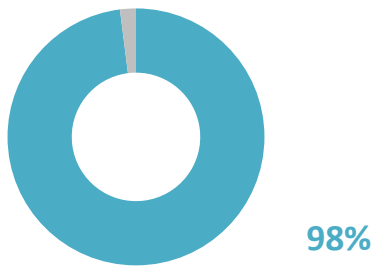
N=561

¹ See Goldberg, D., Looney, D., & Lusin, N. (2015). *Enrollments in languages other than English in United States institutions of higher education, Fall 2013*. Retrieved from Modern Language Association of America website: https://apps.mla.org/pdf/2013_enrollment_survey.pdf.

Impact on U.S. Students

“Aspects of the culture, the people, and the language that I had never thought of were presented to me. My preconceived notions about Chinese and Taiwanese culture were wiped away, and I now have a much more realistic understanding of Sinophone people and culture.”

Figure 5: Host institutions' expectations of cultural engagement were met



“A vibrant first-language role-model who is not a professor - closer in age to students. They can really relate to the FLTAs and the FLTAs bring knowledge of day-to-day life in the culture rather than the language as exclusively an academic subject. It makes it more real and accessible to students.”

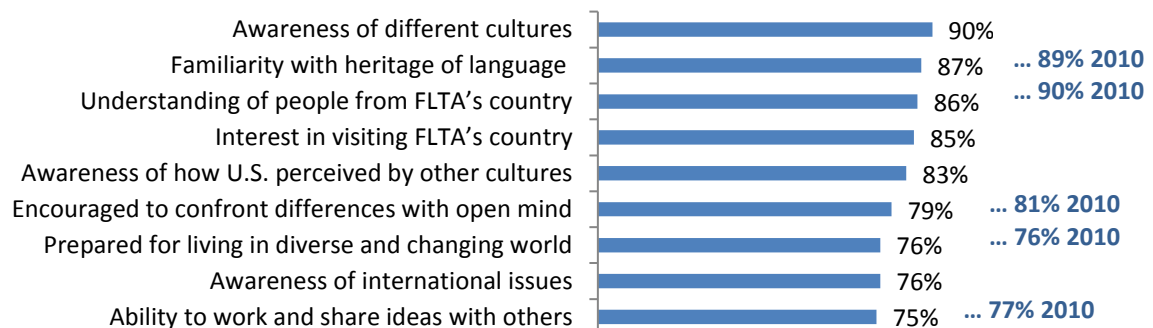
Intercultural development

Developing students' intercultural competence is a key goal of today's universities and part of the core mission of the Fulbright FLTA Program. FLTAs support this mission by organizing various cultural activities outside the classroom, for example presentations on an aspect of their culture at an international cultural fair, or organizing a meal or movie night focused on their culture.

Data Highlights

- U.S. host institutions' greatest expectation of the FLTA program was “promoting cultural engagement among students.” 96 percent of host institution respondents identified this as an expectation and 98 percent of these said the expectation was met or exceeded (see Figure 5).
- In each of nine areas related to their personal (or intercultural) development, at least 75% of U.S. students reported studying with an FLTA had a “high impact.” See Figure 6. Where comparable data exist, they show that positive findings from 2010 were replicated in 2016.
- Self-reported impact on intercultural development was greater among graduate students.

FIGURE 6: PERCENTAGE OF U.S. STUDENTS REPORTING HIGH IMPACT

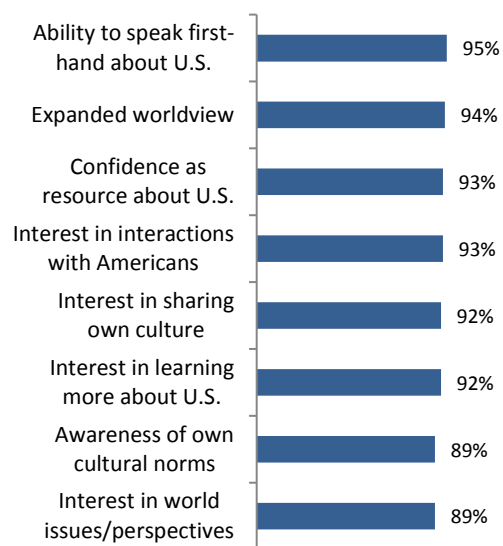


N=790

Impact on FLTAs

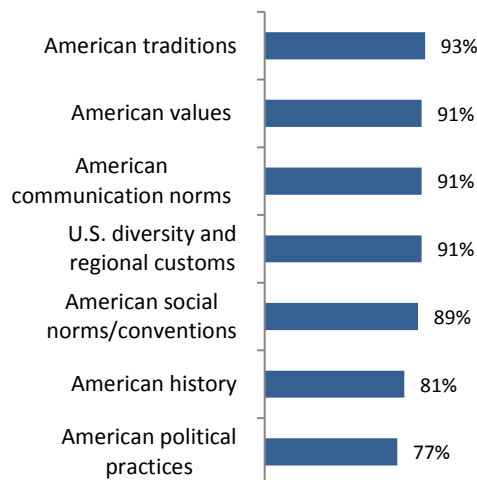
Approximately 400 early career educators annually participate in the Fulbright FLTA Program.

FIGURE 7: PERCENTAGE OF FLTA ALUMNI REPORTING HIGH IMPACT ON INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT



N=716

FIGURE 8: PERCENTAGE OF FLTA ALUMNI WHO WERE MORE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT U.S. CULTURE



N=720

Intercultural development and knowledge of American culture

The Fulbright FLTA Program also enables the FLTAs themselves to extend their knowledge of the cultures and customs of the United States. Their supervisors act as cultural mentors by introducing them to on- and off-campus community members, organizing participation in social events, and explaining aspects of American culture that the FLTA may not understand.

Data Highlights

- In each of eight areas related to their intercultural development, at least 89 percent of alumni reported their FLTA grant year had a “high impact.” See Figure 7.
- In addition, for each of seven topics related to American culture, at least 77% of FLTAs were more knowledgeable after their grant year than they had been at the start of their stay. See Figure 8.
- These findings were confirmed by 86% of supervisors who reported significant improvement in their FLTAs’ intercultural development and knowledge of the U.S.
- Intercultural development ratings were greater among:
 - Female alumnae
 - Alumni whose field of study prior to their FLTA grant year was English Language Teaching
 - Alumni who had maintained more contact with FLTA connections (e.g., fellow Alumni, supervisors, other faculty, students, friends)
 - Alumni who considered FLTA enrichment activities more helpful
- Post-program knowledge about American culture was greater among²:
 - Alumni from regions other than East Asia/Pacific
 - Alumni who participated in more cultural activities
 - Alumni in more contact with FLTA connections
 - Alumni who considered FLTA enrichment activities more helpful

² When taking into account baseline knowledge

Impact on FLTAs

“Professionally, my participation in the FLTA program made it possible for me to get a teaching position in the translation degree at university as soon as I returned to my home country.”

“Participating in the Fulbright program has helped me to be more involved in my Profession. It has increased my dynamism and my motivation to ELT.”

“Having participated in the FLTA program has opened many doors for me. In every job interview I had, I was complimented and people were very interested in knowing further about the experience. I am now taking a Master’s Degree at a great University and everything I have learned through my FLTA year is being very useful now.”

Professional development and pursuits

FLTAs possess at least the equivalent of a U.S. Bachelor’s degree and are early career teachers of English or training to become teachers of English. Many have prior teaching experience. At the conclusion of the program, they are expected to return to their home communities and make an immediate impact by utilizing the skills gained and sharing the experiences gleaned from their time in the U.S.

Data Highlights

- In each of ten areas related to their professional development, at least 75 percent of alumni reported their FLTA grant year had a “high impact.” See Figure 9.
- These findings were confirmed by 80% of supervisors who reported significant improvement in their FLTAs’ professional development.
- Professional development ratings were greater among:
 - Alumni who participated in more cultural activities
 - Alumni who considered FLTA enrichment activities more helpful
 - Alumni who had maintained more contact with FLTA connections since their grant year
 - Alumni who visited the U.S. since their grant year
- 48% of alumni had pursued an advanced degree since their FLTA grant year and 48% were teaching English as their current occupation.

FIGURE 9: PERCENTAGE OF FLTA ALUMNI REPORTING HIGH IMPACT ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Impact on FLTAs

FLTAs come from more than 50 countries, spanning every region of the world, and speak more than 30 languages.

Figure 10: FLTAs more fluent in speaking English

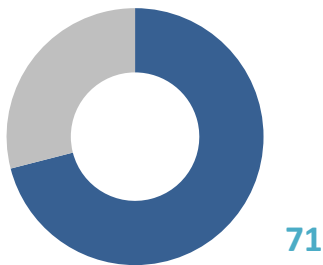


Figure 11: FLTAs more fluent in writing English

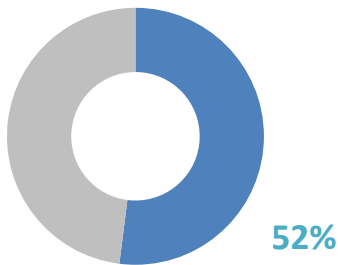
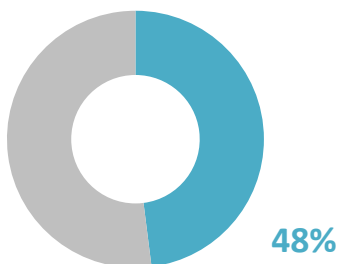


Figure 12: FLTAs more fluent in reading English



English language fluency

FLTA program applicants are eligible to participate in the program if they are proficient in English, as demonstrated by TOEFL or IELTS test scores. In addition to their teaching assistant duties, participation in coursework is an opportunity to increase their English fluency.

Data Highlights

- As illustrated in Figures 10-12, after their grant year:
 - 71% of FLTAs were more fluent in speaking English
 - 52% of FLTAs were more fluent in writing English
 - 48% of FLTAs were more fluent in reading English
- 83% of primary supervisors from host institutions reported significant improvement in their FLTAs' English language fluency.
- Post-program fluency – combined reading, writing, and speaking fluency – was greater among³:
 - Alumni from Africa, Middle East/North Africa, Europe, and Western Hemisphere
 - Alumni who participated in more cultural activities
 - Alumni in more contact with FLTA connections

"It was my first experience in an English-speaking country even though I was an English teacher. Not only did it help me improve my language and cultural skills in relation to the US, which is really important in my profession, I grew personally and had opportunities later on that I would not have otherwise."

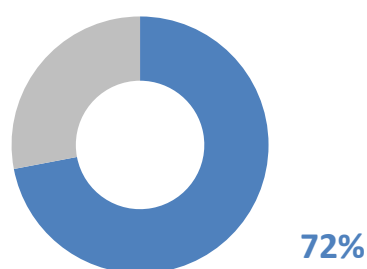
³ When taking into account baseline fluency

Impact on Host Institutions

Over 200 institutions of higher education in the U.S. participate in the FLTA program, including research universities, baccalaureate colleges, community colleges, HBCUs, and HSIs, among others.

“Arabic used to be offered in the Religion Department. We requested an FLTA in 2010 and moved the courses to the language department. In 2011 we added a part timer in Arabic. In 2012 we added an assistant professor of Arabic. In 2015 we added a full time instructor of Arabic. Now we have 40 students declared as Arabic majors. The FLTA helped build interest and capacity so I could get the Dean to approve a position. Our FLTA helps enrich the learning environment and make it into a community of learners.”

Figure 13: Increased number of students served by host institutions*



* Among those with (re)established programs

“Our FLTA spends a lot of time in the office, developing materials and also completing work for his classes, that makes him available a lot, and he is able to share with many of our instructors, sharing experiences and making the environment very enjoyable.”

Language department scope and teaching capacity

Host institutions tailor the program to meet their distinctive instructional needs. FLTAs commonly teach beginning and intermediate language classes (for the language in which they received their grant). They serve in the traditional assistant role or as the primary instructor. They may also offer tutoring or serve as directors of language houses or clubs.

Data Highlights

- 32% of host institutions established or re-established one or more language programs.
 - This was more common among institutions that had hosted LCTLs (37%) than institutions that had not hosted LCTLs (8%)
- (Re)established programs were still being offered among 82% of institutions.
- 72% of host institutions reported that the (re)established programs increased the number of students served. See Figure 13.
- 83% of host institutions who had new curriculum attributed it to the FLTA program.
- 76% of those who had higher levels of language classes attributed it to the FLTA program.
- 68% of those who had new language minors attributed it to the FLTA program.
- 58% of those who had new language majors attributed it to the FLTA program.
- Institutions with FLTAs teaching LCTLs reported a greater impact on their language departments than those hosting commonly taught languages.
- 78% of host institutions reported FLTAs had a “high impact” on the overall teaching environment.

Impact on the FLTA Program

“The FLTA with whom I interacted was more than just a teacher and student. He became involved with not only the students on campus but also the local communities. He is very approachable and will carry on a conversation with you as you are passing in the hallway or courtyard. He responds to emails promptly. He also knows how to incorporate “fun” into his teaching lessons, which helps with retention of knowledge. I strongly recommend him as a teacher and friend.”

– U.S. Student



“I count myself lucky to be a part of the wonderful Fulbright community. It was certainly the best possible program for me and I can only recommend it to anyone!”

– Alumnus



“I think the FLTA program in any academic institution is very beneficial for its multiple characteristics: it enhances cultural exchange and understanding, it opens more opportunities for exchanging students/faculty and administrators in and outside the US, and it educates and brings awareness to our students about other countries, cultures, traditions and politics.”

– Supervisor

Likelihood of promoting or continuing with the FLTA program

U.S. student, alumni, and host institution surveys all included questions about participants’ likelihood of recommending the FLTA experience to others. The results of these questions can be viewed as indicators of potential program growth. The results showed that most participants were enthusiastic about the program, and would refer others to it.

Data Highlights

- At least 60% of U.S. students were highly likely to promote the FLTA program:
 - 67% would recommend that a classmate study with an FLTA
 - 60% would directly promote the program to others
- 58% of U.S. students wanted to continue their own FLTA experience by seeking out another class with the same FLTA.
- 33% of U.S. students were inclined to seek out a class taught by a different FLTA.
- Since their FLTA grant year, 88% of alumni had recommended a Fulbright Student Program (of which the FLTA program is one) to colleagues, friends or family.
- At least 73% of supervisors were highly likely to promote the FLTA program:
 - 80% would advise a separate institution to utilize the FLTA program
 - 74% would advise another colleague at their institution to participate in the FLTA program as a supervisor or advisor
 - 73% would advise a colleague at a separate institution participating in the FLTA program to serve as a supervisor or advisor

Summary

This evaluation considered short-term outcomes as well as longer-term and deeper impacts of the Fulbright FLTA program on U.S. students and participating FLTAs and host institutions. The evaluation reveals improvements in students' foreign language skills and intercultural competence after studying with an FLTA. The results also suggest that studying with an FLTA will have a broader impact on students in terms of continued foreign language study, including more coursework and participation in study abroad programs.

FLTAs demonstrated similar short-term outcomes – improved English language fluency and intercultural competence – highlighting the mutually beneficial nature of the FLTA-student relationship. FLTAs' ratings of the impact of the program on their further education and careers, combined with their related testimonies, paint a picture of life-changing developments over time.

One of the strengths of this evaluation was gathering data on the same phenomena from U.S. students, FLTA alumni, and host institutions. This allowed for review of findings and a check on selective perception. This "triangulation" revealed that host institution representatives corroborated and validated the outcomes and impacts perceived by students and alumni. Supervisors also provided a sense of the longer-term impacts of participation on universities, namely expanding the scope of their language departments and increasing their departmental teaching capacity.

The evaluation also examined the relationship between impacts and other variables, characteristics of participants and their FLTA experiences. Analyses demonstrated the importance of the quality of the experience in explaining improvements. Of particular note, the importance of FLTA-led cultural activities outside of the classroom (i.e., presentations, meals, movie nights) cross cut student and alumni analyses. Thus, encouraging FLTAs to lead these activities and encouraging students to participate in them is likely to enhance the perceived impacts of the already highly valued program.