



## FULBRIGHT FLTA PROGRAM: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG LANGUAGE INSTRUCTORS TO TEACH AND STUDY IN THE US

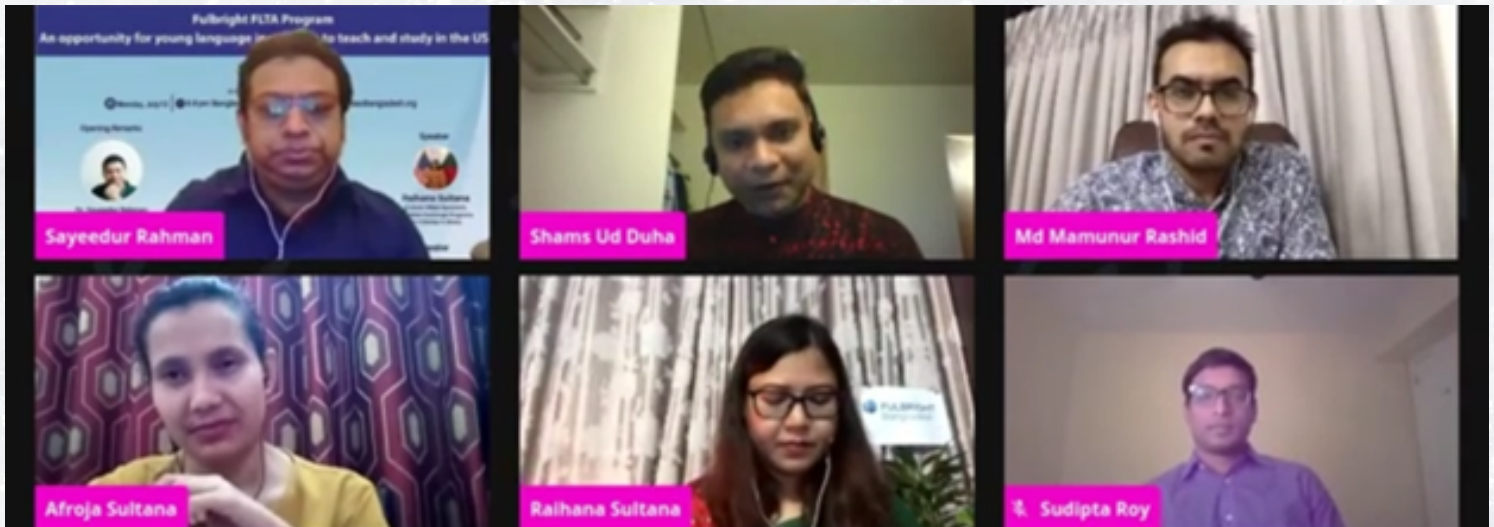
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on this issue:

**SUCCESS STORIES  
OF FULBRIGHT  
SCHOLARS**

### Exploring Opportunities

TESOL Society of Bangladesh (TESOL BD) has always focused on opportunity creation and capacity building for the ELT practitioners operating in Bangladesh. As part of these endeavours, TESOL BD arranged its 4th Webinar session titled “Fulbright FLTA Program: An Opportunity for Young Language Instructors to Teach and Study in the US”.

The nine-month-long Fulbright FLTA (Foreign Language Teaching Assistant), sponsored by the United States Department of State Bureau, is the only Fulbright Foreign Student program that supports teaching assistants in over 30 languages in hundreds of US Institutes. Educators from more than 50 countries contribute in encouraging foreign language instructions by teaching their native languages to the US students. Besides, teachers also get the opportunity to refine their teaching skills, attain professional development, advance their English proficiency and broaden their insights regarding American culture and its people through this program.



Raihana Sultana, Cultural Affairs Specialist, Academic Exchange Programs, US Embassy in Bangladesh; Afroja Sultana, Lecturer, Dept of English, BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology & Fulbright FLTA, Stanford University, USA, 2015-16; Dr. Sudipta Roy, Research Associate, World Faiths Development Dialogue, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs at Georgetown University & Fulbright FLTA, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA, 2011-12; Md Mamunur Rashid, Lecturer, Brac Institute of Languages, Brac University & Fulbright FLTA, New York University, USA, 2017-18, joined the webinar and shared their experiences, insights and also tips for availing Fulbright FLTA. Professor Dr. Sayeedur Rahman, President and Founder of TESOL Society of Bangladesh, delivered the opening remarks while Mohammad Shams Ud Duha, Doctoral Student, Purdue University, USA & Fulbright FLTA, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA 2015-16, moderated the live session. The webinar was subdivided into five micro sessions: FLTA program and application procedures; FLTA: a gateway to higher education in the USA; FLTA: teaching and learning at a top ranked university; FLTA: more than an academic experience; and, a Question and Answer session for the rapt audience. Along with the experience-sharing segment of the Fulbright FLTAs, this webinar elaborated on the application guidelines and the opportunities offered by this program. The FLTA program encourages language instructors working at universities to avail this prestigious scholarship. In order to avail this prestigious scholarship, a candidate is required to have a good and valid IELTS/TOEFL score, a well written and authentic Statement of Purpose (SOP) and a strong reference letter.

The application is processed entirely online. Raihana Islam stated in the session that concessions are made regarding the IELTS/TOEFL scores due to the pandemic, with allowance for later submission. The SOP, Letter of Reference, and other documents will be thoroughly scrutinized prior to considering a candidate for scholarship. The program demands at least 2-years' teaching experience, along with a great sense of professionalism, dependability, and integrity because a Fulbright FLTA holds diverse responsibilities in playing the role of a teacher, a student, and a cultural ambassador simultaneously. The speakers suggested that prospective candidates need to be inquisitive and motivated regarding the selected courses, cultural learning and participative in the discussions, in order to fully enjoy the FLTA experience.

Despite being a non-degree program, FLTA offers the participants the opportunity to be a part of an immensely expansive network of scholars, and an unrivalled scope of representing the country in international platforms. The webinar ended with a highly engaging and interactive Question & Answer session, and guidelines for the future FLTA candidates.

The link to this webinar is provided below for those who would like to explore detailed information related to it.

FLTA webinar link: <https://youtu.be/liQA9Tgvut0>



## President's Message

Since its inception on 18 December 2014, TESOL Society of Bangladesh has been incessantly trying to support and create development opportunities for the ELT practitioners in Bangladesh. As a significant part of this venture, we have arranged a series of webinars. One of the webinars highlighted the Fulbright FLTA program for interested candidates. The FLTA Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program run by the American Center under the U.S. Embassy aims to share opportunities for skill development of primarily English language teachers. The nine month non-degree program is one that has proved life-changing for all participants. Select FLTA alumni shared their lived experiences and success stories with those immensely motivated potential candidates. In the webinar, it was discussed how one can avail Fulbright FLTA and how it can transform the skills, attitude and teaching philosophies of the young ELT professionals. We have a significant number of FLTAs as life members in our society, including our general secretary who herself is an FLTA scholar. I, too, am an alumnus of American Center and I consider myself to be extremely fortunate for having that privilege. I still consider one of my greatest achievements in my professional career to be completing the Professional Development for Teacher Trainers module of American English (AE) E-Teacher Program conducted by Arizona State University in 2018. I am really grateful to the American Center for the support I received.

The Fulbright FLTA program yields a multicultural and multilingual learning environment through hands-on practice. It also provides unique and effective opportunities for networking and professional relationship building. Fulbright FLTA program is truly a transformative experience for English language teachers.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the speakers of the webinar, especially Ms. Raihana Sultana, Cultural Affairs Specialist, Academic Exchange Programs, US Embassy in Bangladesh. I sincerely hope that the aspiring candidates will receive implementable guidelines from this FLTA Special Issue of our newsletter, as well as from the webinar. Stay connected with us for availing and exploring new opportunities in the field of ELT.

Dr. Sayeedur Rahman  
President, TESOL Society of Bangladesh



## **Message From Cultural affairs Specialist, US Embassy**

On behalf of the U.S. Embassy Dhaka, I congratulate TESOL Society of Bangladesh (TSB) as it publishes its second newsletter highlighting the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Program. One of the U.S. State Department's flagship exchange programs, the FLTA is led by the U.S. government in partnership with more than 160 countries worldwide. This year in honor of the 75th anniversary of the Fulbright program, we are proudly commemorating the impact and achievements of over 400,000 alumni globally. The Fulbright Program is a longstanding pillar of U.S. public diplomacy – it produces international leaders, strengthens binational relationships, reduces misunderstandings, and forges lasting connections around the world.

As part of the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, the Fulbright FLTA Program is designed to develop Americans' knowledge of foreign cultures and languages by supporting teaching assistantships in over 30 languages at hundreds of U.S. institutions of higher education. The program offers educators from over 50 countries the opportunity to develop their professional skills and gain first-hand knowledge of the U.S., its culture, and its people. We are proud that 15 years ago, Bangladesh joined the FLTA program. Since 2006, 42 Bangladeshi young academics have participated in the Fulbright FLTA program to refine their skills, increase their English language proficiency, and enhance their knowledge of the United States all the while acting as a cultural ambassador promoting mutual understanding between the United States and Bangladesh.

On the onset of the pandemic when the Embassy had to shift to virtual outreach programs to promote our Exchange programs, TSB hosted a webinar that already reached more than 10,000 people on the Fulbright FLTA program. This webinar encouraged young academics from Bangladesh to participate in this unique exchange program and demonstrated how the FLTA offers excellent professional development opportunities and an exceptional way to promote Bangla language and culture on a global platform. I would like to thank TSB and our FLTA alumni Mohammad Shams Ud Duha, Dinalo Chakma, Md. Abdullah Al Mamun, Raju Ahmed, Reefat Munmun, and Afroja Sultana for beautifully crafting and sharing their stories of Fulbright journey and encouraging several hundred academics to follow their footsteps to bring about a positive change in the world by promoting mutual understanding, trust, and partnership.

Congratulations once again to TSB, its members, the contributors, and editors of the newsletter. We wish TSB continued success as it continues to build up a sustainable community of English language practitioners in Bangladesh that strives to promote research culture, inclusive education, multiculturalism, multilingualism, and collaboration in the field of English language teaching in Bangladesh.

Sincerely,

Raihana Sultana  
Cultural Affairs Specialist  
Education and Academic Exchange Programs  
U.S. Embassy Dhaka.



## MY FULBRIGHT JOURNEY

Dinalo Chakma, Fulbright FLTA, 2018-2019 Session

While I applying for the Fulbright FLTA Program, I had this boosted self-confidence and conviction in my ability to fulfil all great things the fellowship required. I suppose this confident attitude contributed to my selection in the end. But, as my departure date drew nearer, I began to question myself. Having no prior experience of working or living abroad, I had no clue about what was awaiting me and I doubted my ability to handle these. However, when I look back now, I feel that there is not a single thing that I would change about my Fulbright journey. Fulbright has gifted me with the most valuable opportunity to work and study at one of the best places on earth, University of Notre Dame (ND). The best takeaway of this experience is the global community I became a part of and the deep connection I feel with it. I met FLTAs from over 70 countries and all of them became my cooperative peers and some of them have even become my friends and family. We dined together, celebrated festivals together, traveled together and most importantly, stood up

for each other! And this experience has made me realize that deep down, we are all ONE despite the apparent differences we choose to put focus on. Now, I often find myself making calls to Russia or Peru or USA and share my everyday experiences. The Fulbright journey has made me conscious about my status as a global citizen, inspiring me to know and work on global issues. And what can be a better platform other than Fulbright program for working on a better future!

### **Special Tips to Succeed as an FLTA:**

Stay true to your own self and your own root, your culture and present it in the best possible way among the international fraternity. That way, you will not only be able to connect with people around but also set a long-lasting mark in their hearts. So, sharpen your craft, whether it is music or poetry or your knowledge of your own culture and use it as a tool for communication.

**Brief Bio:** Dinalo Chakma is currently working as a Faculty in English at Jashore University of Science and Technology. He is going to start his PhD at University of Florida, USA this Fall (2021). His areas of interest include Cultural Studies, Ethnicity Studies and Indigenous Literature. He intends to work in an ambitious project where he will document the Indigenous Oral Literature of Bangladesh that has been kept unexplored for long.



# THE STORY OF MY FULBRIGHT EXPERIENCE

Md. Abdullah Al Mamun, Fulbright FLTA 2018-2019 Session

Whoever thought a dropout student would be able to go to the University of Michigan someday with Fulbright scholarship, one of the most prestigious American scholarships! I was born in a working-class family, in a small village of Natore district. I completed my primary schooling from Brac Primary school, which is mainly for the poor and dropout students. It was a tiny tin-shade room with no chair and table to sit on; we all used to sit on the floor, including our teacher. From that little tin-shade room where my journey began, I could never imagine that one day I would roam around in one of the largest and most beautiful campuses in the world; the University of Michigan, the number one public university in the United States of America.

The Fulbright scholarship provided me with plenty of opportunities to exchange knowledge about language and culture. As a Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA), my major responsibilities were to teach Bangla Language to the US students and play the role of a cultural ambassador. Therefore, I participated in different cultural exchange programs where I proudly presented different

aspects of Bangladeshi culture which gave the audience a glimpse of the richness of it. On the other hand, I also came to know about the diversity of American culture. Besides, this FLTA program provided me with the opportunity to travel to many places in America, and gather practical knowledge about the people and the culture of those places. This practical knowledge about the American culture helped me to enrich my knowledge, which I gladly share with my students. In addition, working with renowned professors from top-tier US universities helped me develop my teaching skills that are reflected in my teaching now. In a nutshell, every moment of my Fulbright Fellowship experience was a learning opportunity for me which helped me grow as a better teacher.

## Special Tips to Succeed as an FLTA:

I would like to suggest the future FLTAs to be involved with community service activities as much as they can. This is a gateway to be connected with the local community and learn more about the US culture.

**Brief Bio:** Md. Abdullah Al Mamun is currently working as a Lecturer at BRAC Institute of Languages (BIL), BRAC University. He also worked as a faculty advisor in First Year Advising Team (FYAT). His area of teaching covers Foundation Course in English, Pre-University, English Training Program for BRAC Primary School Teachers, English Training Program for BRAC Managers, and English Proficiency Development Course (EPDC).



## MY ACADEMIC LEARNING IN THE FLTA PROGRAM

Raju Ahmmed, Fulbright FLTA 2019-2020 Session

I worked at the University of Michigan from 2019-20 and had some amazing experiences. The first thing that surprised me about the UoM was the class size. Each of the language classes was very small, usually comprising of eight to fifteen students. The second thing I liked was the way the students addressed the teacher. US students usually address their teachers by their last names and use 'Professor' or 'Dr.' to show respect. My students called me by my first name (I told them to do so), and I enjoyed it. The third thing that impressed me was the online system that they call 'Canvas'. I could upload the teaching materials, and grade them online, and the students got a quick notification about it. The professors in the US do not give their lectures all the time, but they want to listen to their students' ideas. While attending some courses, I have mainly observed how US professors teach and how I should apply these techniques when I come back to Bangladesh.

I believe my teaching experience in the US has made me a more efficient teacher as I can devise many more student-friendly teaching activities and use more student-centered techniques. If you have a strong desire to develop your English and professional skills, and if you ever have the chance to take part in a program like this, I strongly recommend it.

### **Special Tips to Succeed as an FLTA:**

Try to engage more with outdoor activities because being an FLTA means socializing with the American people.

**Brief Bio:** Raju Ahmed is working as a Lecturer in English at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman University. He is also engaged in a research project funded by UGC and he is also preparing for a doctoral program in teaching and learning.



# MY LIFE CHANGING JOURNEY THROUGH FULBRIGHT

Reefat Munmun, Fulbright FLTA 2013-2014 Session

For me, another name for the Fulbright FLTA program, funded by the U.S. Department of State, is "Life Changer," and honestly, it was a dream come true. I was placed at Indiana University, Bloomington (IUB) in USA which, surprisingly, matches the abbreviation of my work place at home, Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). Starting from the orientation at University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, until the end of my Fulbright journey at IU, Bloomington, I was taught through hands-on experience about how to build bridges between and connect with people, countries, communities and most importantly myself. Throughout my fellowship, I could feel my professional growth and adaptability increasing and I became equipped with diverse skills, incomparable knowledge, excellent educational approaches, a widespread exposure to different social and cultural concepts and activities of foreign lands. Most importantly, it made me a more self-confident and professional.

I learned to be exceedingly active as a cultural ambassador and earned the reputation of creating a "Little Bangladesh" in Bloomington through a variety of events at my workplace. However, my biggest takeaway from all of it was a highly polished networking ability that not only helped me head my institute in Bangladesh but also provided me with the rock-solid foundational strength and positive ability to build a much-needed fresh outlook of my career and the institute I am running. Truly, all the credit for this goes to my Fulbright FLTA journey.

## **Special Tips to Succeed as an FLTA:**

Have an open mind, prepare well, be ready to learn and gather new experiences, explore yourself, be ready to meet people from every corner of the world and walk of life, and make sure to build your network!

**Brief Bio:** Reefat Munmun is the Head of Bangla Language Institute, Independent University of Bangladesh. Her primary goal is to serve as a cultural ambassador with an intention to spread the beauty of Bengali language and culture beyond the borders by teaching Bengali as a foreign language to the non-native speakers.





# FULBRIGHT FLTA: A LIFE-CHANGING OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH AND EXPLORATION

Afroja Sultana, Fulbright FLTA 2015-2016 Session

Being a Fulbright FLTA proved to be an amazing experience of learning and growth for me. As an FLTA, I received the opportunity of being in the classrooms of my desired courses, and the resultant excitement was great. As a person who always loved studying, exploring ideas and contemplating on them, I found myself in a different realm of enjoyment of learning from some of the greatest minds, thanks to this program. I am truly indebted to my professors whom I met in my classes, who taught me countless new ways of teaching and introduced me to new concepts and ideas through their incomparable teaching styles. I was able to attend several courses on Education and Applied Linguistics that had brought me new perspectives and ideas and therefore, enriched me as a learner as well as introduced me with the beauty of being in a multicultural classroom environment, where everyone had something to add to the experience of others.

At the same time, the Bengali language classes that I conducted as an FLTA enhanced my teaching skills, equipped me with new insights and inspired me to be a

better teacher. Teaching foreign students has its own type of challenges and opportunities for growth. However, these challenges lead me to develop myself in many ways over the course of these nine months. Throughout my journey, I kept learning the art of dedication, focus, and continuous exploration of knowledge at a whole new level and after returning to my home country, I have continued to explore knowledge and ideas, and have been trying to guide and assist my students in developing and expanding their own knowledge and skills.

During my stay at Stanford as an FLTA I learnt to collaborate with like-minded individuals to carry out shared goals in more effective ways.

Fulfilling those goals becomes much easier when we collaborate with people who have the same dreams and vision for the future. We can bring in new knowledge, new enterprises, more easily, in more efficient ways by collaborating and joining hands together, and as an FLTA, this belief was reinforced. I believe, we all have the same desires to achieve our goals and aspirations.

Apart from learning from my classes and courses, attending this program made me see life from a different perspective in a foreign country, meet many new people, make friends, visit places that otherwise would have been impossible to do. Particularly, my visit to Washington DC during the Mid-Year Conference, Salt Lake City in Utah, and Grand Canyons, Bryce Canyon, Horse Shoe Bend in Arizona and the Lake Tahoe in Nevada during winter are still vibrant snapshots in my mind. Visiting these diverse landscapes instilled in me a keen desire to go and see more places and reinvest in the idea of one shared world.

It is obvious that we learn many ways of improving our surroundings only by being in a more developed country. We can follow in their footsteps in bringing positive changes and I think being in Stanford as an FLTA inspired me to strive to bring positive changes through my ideas and actions.

I strongly recommend the aspiring individuals to venture forth in grabbing this opportunity of growth, learning and exploration. I sincerely thank US Department of State, IIE and American Center for believing in me and giving me this beautiful, life-changing opportunity to expand and grow as a professional, as well as an individual.

**Special Tips to Succeed as an FLTA:**

Write your essays with great care and bring your original ideas to entail how you would like to showcase your cultural heritage and festivals in your host institution. You will be teaching your US students about your culture, so you need to be a great representative of that. So prepare well in advance for both your classroom and cultural teaching learning.

**Brief Bio:** Afroja Sultana is currently teaching at the Department of English, BGMEA University of Fashion and Technology (BUFT). Besides her teaching, she enjoys singing, reciting and writing.

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## Eligibility Criteria for Fulbright FLTA program:

**The applicant needs to:**

1. Be a teacher of English or any related field like American Studies, Journalism and Media, and American English/English Literature at the university level, and must demonstrate complete fluency in English language.
2. Have completed their four (04) year Bachelor with/without one (01) year Master degree.
3. Have a valid TOEFL/IELTS score. (In case of TOEFL the minimum requirement is 80 (IBT) and for IELTS, a minimum score of 7.0)
3. Be a resident of Bangladesh who neither attended any US institutions nor visited the USA before.
4. Possess the qualities like maturity, reliability, integrity and professionalism.

**Application process:**

1. The applicants need to submit three essays (through a designated web portal)
2. Submit reference letters (03)
3. Submit academic transcripts of Bachelor and Masters level.
4. Submit a valid TOEFL/IELTS score.
5. If primarily selected, the applicant will need to attend a written test followed by an interview for final selection.

**Note: Applicants will find all necessary information in the U.S Embassy website.**

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## Keep in Touch with Us:

The vision of the Society is to establish an engaging platform for professionals working in the field of TESOL/Applied Linguistics and other allied disciplines to participate in constructive dialogue with one another and with recent developments to strengthen the impact of the field in the community. The Society can help you to remain connected to fellow applied linguists through regular interaction and collaboration with the members.

## Become a Member:

- Student membership: BDT 200/- (BDT 200/- yearly renewal fee)
- General membership: Fees 1000 (BDT 500/- yearly renewal fee)
- Associate Membership: 5000 BDT (500 BDT discount if registered in a group of 10) (BDT 500/- yearly renewal fee for regional membership or collective members of a regional EL association)
- Institutional Membership: Departments of English of any school, college, etc.
- Membership Link:  
<https://tesolbangladesh.org/membership/?v=fbd25224d617>

## Affiliations:



## Engage with the Society:



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