

Remarks by Fulbright Austria Executive Director Dr. Lonnie Johnson at the Celebration of 65 Years of Fulbright Exchanges at the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York City on April 5, 2016

I would like to briefly introduce you to Ambassador Kathryn Walt-Hall and Craig Hall, whom we want to acknowledge this evening. Kathryn Walt-Hall is a grower of fine wines today and her career as a vintner actually began back in the 1970, when her family purchased their first vineyard. She has had a multifaceted career as a successful businesswoman, attorney, community activist, and, as you know, she served as the United States ambassador to Austria from 1997-2001.

Craig Hall is the chairman and founder of the Dallas-based Hall Financial Group. He always has been a passionate entrepreneur, and he is a businessman and investor with a wide range of interests. I will never forget the story he once told me about the beginning of his entrepreneurial career at the University of Michigan, when he, as a student, figured out that based on the rents that he and his roommates were paying in their off-campus housing he could buy the house they were living in. And he did.

During her tenure as US Ambassador to Austria, one of Ambassador Hall's many responsibilities was serving as one of the two honorary co-chairs of the binational Austrian-American Fulbright Commission – along with the Austrian Minister for Science and Research, a position that happens to be filled by the Austrian Vice Chancellor Reinhold Mitterlehner today. She was an enthusiastic advocate of educational and cultural exchange and all things Fulbright, and the annual receptions she and her husband hosted at their residence for the incoming US Fulbright grantees as well as the homecoming Austrian Fulbright grantees were always memorable experiences for all parties involved.

During his stay in Vienna, Craig Hall studied at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy, and he served on the board of the Austrian-American Fulbright Commission. He also completed a book on entrepreneurial responsibility, and as a private businessman and an entrepreneur he was particularly interested in the institutional, structural, and cultural challenges that post-communist economies in Eastern Europe were confronting.

Towards the end of their tenure in Austria, the Halls were interested in finding a way to express their sense of commitment to where they had been and what they had done in a manner that would combine their philanthropic engagement with their topical interests in Austrian-American relations, public diplomacy, academic exchange, entrepreneurship, and

economic reform in Central Europe. After a number of wide-ranging conversations, the idea of a Fulbright-Hall Distinguished Chair for Entrepreneurship that could be managed by the Austrian-American Fulbright Commission was born.

I do not want to describe any of the administrative detail that went along with getting the initial agreement signed and approved by the powers that be in Washington, DC in 2001, but the Fulbright-Hall award did have to be approved by the presidentially-appointed J. William Fulbright Scholarship Board. Given the lead-times associated with budgeting, programming, and recruiting for academic exchanges, the first Fulbright-Hall Distinguished Chair for Entrepreneurship did not make it to Central Europe until 2004.

As far as programming goes, the Halls were genuinely innovative and forward-looking. They were interested in the promotion of entrepreneurship long before it became as fashionable and widespread as it is today. They also wanted the Chair to have a regional presence, and Craig Hall, as a private businessman, felt that Austrian business culture could be more entrepreneurial, too. As a result of these considerations, we came up with the idea of having the Chair float from country to country and from Fulbright commission to Fulbright commission for five years, and the Halls pledged €250,000 to facilitate an award that was not only distinguished in name but also in terms of the generous level of support the award entailed. Starting in 2004, the Chair “floated” from Poland to Bulgaria before being anchored at the WU Vienna and in Bratislava in 2007 with a split-site agenda after which it moved on to Hungary and to the Czech Republic.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the presence of Professor Tony Warren from Pennsylvania State University, who was the inaugural chair holder at the WU Vienna and in Bratislava in 2007. He has been coming back to Vienna ever since, and he has been acknowledged twice for his excellence in teaching at the WU Vienna’s Executive MBA Program. This is just an isolated example of what we call longitudinal impact: how the Fulbright Program creates value and how the long-term returns on initial investments play out.

We learned a number of things from the first five-year cycle of the Fulbright Hall Distinguished Chair for Entrepreneurship. Having it “float” in Central Europe was brilliant programming and looked great on paper; however – if I may be frank – it did not work that well in practice. Everybody was reinventing the wheel, and there was not much continuity. However, the WU Vienna had been a congenial host, the split-site agenda with Bratislava had worked well, and Professor Warren was enthusiastic about the opportunities inherent in this construction, so – to make a long story short – the idea of anchoring the Chair at the WU Vienna with a split-site teaching agenda was born. This idea was reinforced by the insight that it would not be

necessary to move the chair around to reach different audiences of students. The WU Vienna is the magnet institution for students of business and economics from Central and Eastern Europe, and they account for a substantial number of the international students enrolled at the WU Vienna today.

This reconfigured Fulbright-Hall Distinguished Chair for Entrepreneurship in Central Europe anchored at the WU Vienna provided the basis for a new three-year pledge of \$150,000 by the Halls to fund the chair as of 2010. The Halls then renewed this pledge for a second three-year period, and last year, they extended it for a third three-year period, thus securing its funding from 2017-18 through 2019-20. So if we look at the past, the present, and the future of this award, we see a 14-year commitment – 5 + 3 + 3 + 3 – that has entailed the Halls pledging (if one takes the exchange rates into account) well over \$750,000 to fund the Fulbright-Hall Distinguished Chair for Entrepreneurship in Central Europe. The Halls are an essential part of the distinction that makes the Fulbright-Hall Distinguished Chair so distinguished.

All of the representatives of the Fulbright communities in Austria and in the United States are especially grateful to the Austrian Cultural Forum New York and Christine Moser, its director, for providing us with this opportunity to acknowledge the Halls: as great friends and advocates of the Austrian-American Fulbright Program; as generous donors and sponsors of this award; and as great believers in the benefits of educational exchange, entrepreneurship, and the relationship between them.

Three different individuals and institutions wish to express their gratitude to the Halls and the Hall Foundation. Professor Edeltraud Hanappi-Egger, rector of the WU Vienna University of Economics and Business; Austrian Consul General Dr. Georg Heindl on behalf of Vice Chancellor and Minister for Science, Research, and Economy Dr. Reinhold Mitterlehner; and Mary Kirk, Director of the Office for Academic Exchanges at the State Department, on behalf of US Secretary of State John Kerry.