

Excerpt from Dr. Lonnie Johnson's Remarks on September 21, 2017

. . . . Since its inception, the Austrian-American Fulbright Program has developed auspiciously with the different kinds of resources that have been placed at its disposal, and those resources have changed, too. The Austrian Fulbright Program is in many respects at a critical juncture in its history because – as the Bob Dylan, the Nobel Prize winning poet and bard from Minnesota has sung – “ the times, they are a changing”

The support of both governments is one of the keys to maintaining the Fulbright program, but federal budgets are under increasing amounts of pressure on both sides of the Atlantic. Cuts to the Fulbright Program have been proposed by the Obama administration in 2014 and the Trump administration this year, but Congress has been vigilant in maintaining funding for educational and cultural exchanges: a big shout out here to Lindsey Graham, the Republican Senator from the fine State of South Carolina and Chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee responsible for the State Department and Foreign Operations.

We are living in a budgetary environment in which flat funding is a success, and in a zero-sum world. Advocating for the program in the future is an exceptionally important task.

The Republic of Austria has been and is an enthusiastic supporter of the Fulbright Program. Austrian funding earmarked exclusively for grants for Austrian and American students has increased throughout the years -- with a € 100,000 increase for Austrian student awards for 2018-19 -- and we are particularly proud of the win-win relationships we have with over 20 different partner institutions that are generously sponsoring grants for U.S. Fulbright scholars in Austria, in particular. Fulbright Austria was proud to have the [sixth largest program for U.S. scholars in the world](#) last year: behind big players like India, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Japan and ahead of Canada, Russia, and China.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Austrian Marshall Plan Foundation – our newest partner – that is funding up to five STEM awards for U.S students to do research at Austrian universities in the future.

Fulbright Austria leverages a lot of support in the United States for our Austrian grantees, too. Every dollar our Fulbright grantees receive is matched by another dollar of support that comes to them from a wide variety of other private and public sources.

In the course of time, the business model of Fulbright Austria has changed. We are not distributing lots of revenue placed at our disposal by the governments like we used to in the olden days; we have become social entrepreneurs, who are basically beginning with an increasingly limited amount of revenue as starting capital and using it to broker relationships and leverage assets that benefit our partners: both individuals and institutions.

The return on this “investment” is high. We are creating a lot of value in the form of opportunities for participants in this program to live and learn in the United States or Austria: to promote bilateral

educational and cultural exchange between two countries that are good friends, share common values, and do a lot of business with each other, too.

So what is the critical juncture that I mentioned? The core revenue for the program that we use to maintain our operations is shrinking as our program grows and prospers. Inflation is not bad but prices are going up: especially in US higher education.

In light of all of these pressures, the binational board of the Austrian-American Educational Commission has been thinking strategically about the program. In order for Fulbright Austria to keep on doing what it does so well -- to enhance our programs and to valorize the benefits associated with them -- Fulbright Austria is launching a number of new initiatives. And we are counting on your support.

As social entrepreneurs already engaged in the business of forging private-public partnerships in the field of educational exchange, we will proactively seek more private support for our programs: in Austria and the United States and from alumni as well as institutional donors who subscribe to the underlying values and the spirit of the Fulbright Program.

We will be launching [our first annual call](#) for support from Austrian Fulbright alumni with an event on "Giving Tuesday" called "Thanksgiving – Thank Fulbright" on November 28 in collaboration with the Austrian Fulbright Alumni Association.