

Letter from the Chair of the Fulbright Finland Foundation Board of Directors

The Foundation's year 2020 may be wrapped around three major points: First, the new permanent strategic "Seeking solutions for global challenges" funding proved to be very timely. The Fulbright Finland Foundation is all about making the world change and that's why the whole Board was behind this new form of funding right from the start. This new strategic award supports the Foundation's vision. This was a major initiative, and it immediately attracted a lot of interest both in the United States and in Finland.

Second, navigating through the pandemic has really tested the readiness of this organization to keep going with very clear goals and simultaneously sharing knowledge to others, as well. At the onset of the pandemic, the Foundation rapidly reacted to the new and constantly evolving situation and worked individually with both its Finnish and U.S. grantees to help them navigate their individual circumstances, and designed new and creative solutions whenever necessary to help the grantees in this unprecedented situation. All activities and programs were rapidly pivoted to online platforms. The Foundation also began to offer entirely new types of virtual events in order to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the spread of the new technology. Thus, third, the Foundation took a major leap towards digitalized services and ways to operate.

The year 2020 will be remembered as a year of bold, even though somewhat forced changes in the way how internationalization is seen. On the one hand, we saw a rapid increase of webinars, togetherness and remote/hybrid student and researcher exchanges. On the other, we also grew to feel lonely and isolated within the digital world instead of actually meeting each other in person. Even in the Foundation Board of Directors, the Board members have during the past year so many times uttered how we miss in-person meetings. It indeed has now been a full year since we actually met.

In view of the Fulbright Finland Foundation activities, I do need to state that the year 2020 was a success. Agile responses to the evolving Covid-19 situation last Spring, exceptionally strong networks around the world, and effortless collaboration relationships were the key for this also during this very exceptional year. The credibility and quality of any organization is measured during crisis. I believe no-one will state against my viewpoint that the Fulbright Finland Foundation is a true leader and now even a stronger organization than before. I am ready to now pass on the tasks of the Chair to my successor, Mr. David Yoken. My work in the Board still goes on.

Together Shaping the Future!



Dr. Piia Björn
Chair of the Board of Directors
Fulbright Finland Foundation

Find out more of year 2020 activities:
www.fulbright.fi/about-us/year-focus