

USIEF hosted a pre-departure orientation program for Indian Fulbright scholars

The United States-India Educational Foundation (USIEF) hosted a two-day pre-departure orientation in Kolkata for the new batch of Indian Fulbright-Nehru and Fulbright-Kalam fellows. For the 2023-2024 academic year, USIEF has selected 157 Indian Fulbright fellows for study, research, teaching, and professional development in the United States. The Fulbrighters, drawn from across India, will pursue projects in a variety of disciplines including agriculture, anthropology, climate, education, energy, history, political science, public health, science and technology, urban and regional planning, and women studies, among others.

Current U.S. Fulbright scholars in India and Indian Fulbright alumni led panel discussions and small group sessions designed to help ease the transition to the academic, social, and cultural environment of the United States. Topics covered over the two-days included discussions around life on a U.S. campus, cultural adjustment and cross-cultural communication, and health and safety. The orientation also helped stimulate thought about Fulbrighters' responsibilities as cultural ambassadors.

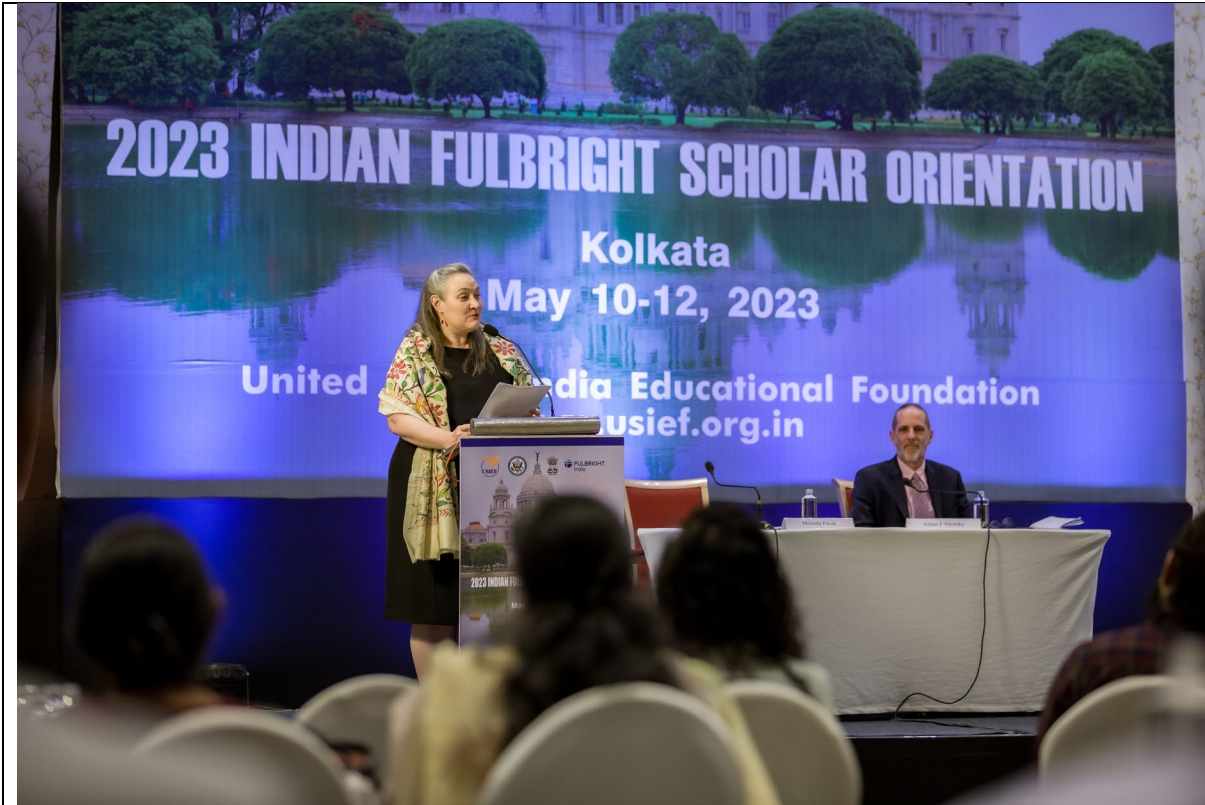
Consul General Melinda Pavek delivered the opening address at the inaugural session. She highlighted the importance of educational and cultural exchanges as an essential part of the U.S.-India bilateral relationship.

Adam Grotsky, Executive Director USIEF congratulated the scholars on their accomplishments and encouraged them to take full advantage of this opportunity by immersing themselves in their universities, academic departments, and labs, as well as engaging in their wider communities.

USIEF received an all-time high record number of applications for FY23 Fulbright-Nehru and Fulbright-Kalam competition for Indian citizens and selected finalists through a rigorous review and selection process. The recruitment process was highly competitive, and the success rate was only 6.75%.

"I can say with all confidence that the Orientation Program was very informative and more useful than I had expected. The feedback of the Fulbright alumni gave us valuable insights into the academic, social, and cultural environment in the U.S. The Q&A sessions effectively addressed our practical and logistical issues of travel, housing, and banking as well as their experiences of the U.S. university system and campus life. The PDO also offered us an opportunity to interact with fellow grantees from varied backgrounds and specialisations." – observes Prof. Madhu Singh of the University of Lucknow who will be affiliated with Stanford University under the Fulbright-Nehru Academic and Professional Excellence Fellowship Program.

As per Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Research fellow Devika Singh Shekhawat, *"It gave clarity in terms of the expected structure and timeline of the program and prepared us for what to expect during our tenure. It was helpful for networking and meeting faculty and scholars in our fields and research interests. Appreciate how the resource persons gave their time and attention to our questions and doubts."* Devika will be affiliated with Cornell University.



Consul General Melinda Pavek addressing the Fulbright cohort. USIEF Executive Director Adam Grotzky is on the dais.



Fulbright-Nehru and Fulbright-Kalam fellows with the Consul General Melinda Pavek and USIEF staff at the Kolkata PDO.



Experts at a panel discussion on “Living in the U.S.”

For the profiles of the Fulbright cohort visit https://www.usief.org.in/images/pdfs/E-PDO_Booklet_Kolkata_May_10-12-2023.pdf.