

Ambassador Mull's Remarks
Conference on the 55th Anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Poland
May 15, 2014

Thank you, Professor Palys. Good morning, everyone. It is my pleasure to join you here today.

I am pleased that Minister of Science and Higher Education Kolarska-Bobińska is here with us, as well as Tom Healy, the Chairman of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, who is visiting from the United States. Thank you to Małgorzata Krasowska and her team from the Fulbright Commission for organizing this special commemoration.

Today, we celebrate 55 years of the Fulbright program in Poland. But as we all know, this year also marks an extraordinary milestone for Poland. It has been 25 years since Poles regained their hard-earned place among the democratic nations of Europe. So much has changed in the last quarter century. It is easy for us, in today's dynamic economy and vibrant political system, to forget about the enormous importance of educational exchange to Poland's remarkable transformation. An open society requires the free exchange of ideas. When governments try to control everything, society suffers; but when they encourage independent scholarship and the free flow of ideas, especially across borders, the long-term results can be extraordinary.

The Fulbright program is a prime example of how the free flow of ideas changes lives for the better and brings countries closer together. As historian Arnold Toynbee noted, the Fulbright program is "one of the really generous and imaginative things that have been done in the world since World War II." The Fulbright program has created a community of about 250,000 alumni in 155 countries. Here in Poland, about 4,000 people have participated in the program over the last 55 years. It's no exaggeration to say that this talented and motivated group of people has had an incalculably positive influence on both our countries.

Many prominent government and business leaders in Poland are Fulbright alumni, such as Danuta Huebner, Marek Belka, and Maciej Świącicki, just to name a few. Of course, the Fulbright program is not limited to politicians and economists. The program boasts talented scholars from all fields, including the physical sciences, the arts, social sciences, and humanities. Through scholarships, fellowships and related programs, Fulbright in Poland enables promising students and exceptional scholars to engage in collaborative research, connect with the best minds in their fields, acquire the best possible training, and get involved in their new communities.

Poland is now in the midst of a new transition -- transforming its economy into one driven by high-technology and innovation. Fulbrighters are already contributing to this transformation, but there is more that the Fulbright program can do. Fulbright in Poland has ambitious goals to double the number of Fulbright scholars, contribute to the knowledge economy and to civil society, and ensure that scholars connect directly with both policy makers and practitioners. This

is not easy in times of government fiscal austerity, of course. We'll need to look hard at where to invest our scholarships, and do all we can to support the growth of innovation between our nations. Now, more than ever, we must identify and empower our most talented minds, support their pursuit of academic achievement and help position them to contribute to our collective well-being. We need to connect universities and the business community to promote social innovation and entrepreneurship. We must be poised as citizen leaders to contribute to our knowledge economy. This conference on leadership, education, and innovation is your invitation to partner with us in realizing that vision.

I congratulate you all on the 55th anniversary of the Fulbright Program in Poland, and on Poland's last 25 years of democracy and prosperity. I wish you continued success and a productive conference. Thank you.