



# 2025

## GRANTEE BOOKLET



**FULBRIGHT**  
New Zealand

TE TŪĀPAPA MĀTAURANGA  
O AOTEAROA ME AMERIKA

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2025 Fulbright US Graduates  
(from left) Emily Lau, Miah  
Clark, and Elinor Fajer.

Cover Photo: 2025 Fulbright NZ Graduates (from left) Anna Rankin, Cameron Young, Maria Rabino-Neira, Synteche Collins, Phoebe Johnson, and Nathan Joe.



## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD

On behalf of the Fulbright New Zealand Board of Directors and Staff, I extend my warm congratulations to our 2025 grantees. A Fulbright Award testifies not only to your high academic, professional, and creative abilities, but also confers on you an important role as representatives of your country and your culture. It offers you, as recipients, the opportunity to advance knowledge and practice in your chosen fields and sectors, and in doing so to strengthen the links between academic and creative communities in Aotearoa and the United States. I am delighted to welcome this new cohort of Fulbright Grantees, and I wish them only the very best for their Fulbright experience and for the future.

**Alastair Bisley**  
*Chairperson of the Board, Fulbright New Zealand*

## FULBRIGHT NEW ZEALAND

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAMME

The Fulbright programme of international educational exchange was an initiative of US Senator J. William Fulbright from Arkansas, who in the aftermath of World War II believed that mutual understanding between different countries and cultures was crucial to ensure a peaceful future for the world.

The Fulbright Act, an ingenious piece of legislation passed by the United States Congress in 1946, directed proceeds from the sale of surplus war property, foreign loan repayments and reparations to fund the “promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science.”

In Senator Fulbright’s own words, the Fulbright programme aims “to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship.”

New Zealand was the fifth country to sign up to the Fulbright programme by bilateral treaty with the United States of America, in 1948. Since then Fulbright New Zealand has granted more than 3,000 exchange awards, sending over 1,900 New Zealand graduate students, artists, academics, teachers and professionals on exchanges to the US and welcoming over 1,600 Americans on exchanges to New Zealand.

Fulbright New Zealand is jointly funded by the US and New Zealand governments with additional funding from award partners, private philanthropists and alumni donors. It is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of New Zealanders and Americans.

The Fulbright programme has been described as one of the largest and most significant movements of scholars across the face of the earth and now operates in 165 countries, funding around 8,000 exchanges per year for participants to study, research, teach or present their work in another country.

The more than 400,000 Fulbright alumni worldwide include heads of state, cabinet ministers, ambassadors, politicians, judges, heads of corporations, university presidents, journalists, artists, professors and teachers. Esteemed alumni of the Fulbright programme include Dame Marie Clay, Sir Kenneth Keith, Sir Wallace Rowling, Dame Anne Salmond, David Cunliffe, Gareth Farr, Witi Ihimaera, Michael King, Alan MacDiarmid, Bill Manhire, Ron Paterson, Jan Wright and many other prominent New Zealanders.

Fulbright grantees make the most of their exchanges to get to know and understand a different country and culture, to advance themselves academically or professionally and to make lifelong friendships and professional relationships. Many look back on their Fulbright exchange as a life-changing experience and a defining moment of their career.



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Congratulations to all our 2025 grantees! I am thrilled to celebrate your success and warmly welcome you to the Fulbright whānau.

The Fulbright New Zealand Commission has existed now for over 77 years. That is over 77 years of scholarly, cultural, social exchanges that have enriched the lives of thousands of participants, many of whom have gone on to make significant contributions in their respective countries. The programme is testament to a deeply held, shared commitment to bettering our world and our place within it.

Year after year we welcome another incredibly impressive cohort of graduates and scholars from the United States to Aotearoa, and every year we farewell an equally talented crop of New Zealanders heading in the other direction. Each one of you takes up and continues that same commitment.

This year we recognise and celebrate our cohort of 15 New Zealand Fulbright grantees who will be heading to the US to take up their awards. We have also welcomed a total of ten US graduates and scholars here in Aotearoa, along with three Axford Fellows.

The 2025 cohort of Award winners represents a wonderfully diverse range of research topics and backgrounds. I have no doubt you will all make exceptional ambassadors of New Zealand or US scholarship and culture.

Let me once more offer my sincere congratulations, admirations and the very best wishes to all our 2025 grantees. I hope your Fulbright experience will be nothing short of life changing.

Ngā mihi nui,

**Penelope Borland**  
*Executive Director, Fulbright New Zealand*

# FULBRIGHT GRADUATE PROGRAMME

Fulbright New Zealand offers a range of awards to New Zealand and American graduate students to study or research in each other's countries. Grantees are selected on the basis of academic excellence and ambassadorial qualities. In addition to award payments towards study or research, all grantees receive return airfares, a health benefit plan, enrichment activities and programme support during their exchange.

## FULBRIGHT SCIENCE AND INNOVATION GRADUATE AWARDS

These awards are for promising New Zealand graduate students to undertake postgraduate study or research at US institutions in fields targeted to support growth and innovation in New Zealand.

Five awards were granted this year. These awards are sponsored by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment.



### SOPHIE COUPER

Sophie Couper, from Tairāwhiti and Whanganui, will be completing a Master of Public Health at Columbia University in New York City, New York.

Sophie graduated from University of Auckland with a Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBChB) and Bachelor of Medical Science Honours (First class) in 2022. She is currently working at Te Whatu Ora Tairāwhiti in Obstetrics and Gynaecology.



### KATHERINE (KATIE) ELLIS

Katherine Ellis from Christchurch will research the influence of the mechanical microenvironment on endometriosis behaviour at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Katie graduated with a BE (Hons First Class) in 2022 from the University of Canterbury, where she is also currently a PhD student.



### LAURA GEMMELL-SINNOTT (KAHUNGUNU, TŪWHARETOA, WAIKATO, NGĀRUAHINE, RAUKAWA, PAHAUWERA)

Laura Gemmell-Sinnott from Hastings will research health policy design in sexual and reproductive health with a focus on Indigenous health equity at Columbia University, New York City, towards a PhD at the University of Otago.

Laura graduated with a BHSc from the University of Otago in 2021 and a MHSc (Distinction) in 2023 from Massey University.



### ERIC SHEN

Eric Shen from Auckland will complete a Master of Science in Mechanical Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, Georgia.

Eric graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons First Class) in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Auckland in New Zealand in 2024.



### CAMERON (CAM) YOUNG

Cameron Young from Hastings will research chronic disease progression, focusing on how diet during pregnancy causes epigenetic changes in offspring at the Wisconsin Institute of Discovery, University of Wisconsin–Madison in Wisconsin, and nutritional public health interventions at the Centre for Indigenous Health, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, in Arizona and New Mexico.

Cam graduated with a BSc (Hons First Class) in 2022 and is partway through a PhD and MB ChB at the University of Otago.

## FULBRIGHT NGĀ PAE O TE MĀRAMATANGA GRADUATE AWARD

This award is for a promising New Zealand graduate student to undertake postgraduate study or research in the US in the field of Indigenous Development.

One award was granted this year.



### LETEISHA TE AWHE-DOWNEY (NGĀTI RUANUI, NGAA RAURU)

Leteisha Te Awhe-Downey from Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington will be a Visiting Student Researcher looking at Indigenous experiences of diaspora at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and the University of California, Berkeley.

Leteisha graduated with a BA in Geography and Indigenous Development in 2020, and a BA (Hons First Class) in Geography and Māori Studies in 2021 from Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka—University of Otago, where she is currently a PhD candidate.

## GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT – YASMIN OLSEN

2023 Fulbright Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Graduate Award



*“During my Fulbright exchange I built strong foundations that will serve me well in my future. I was able to learn from world-leading scholars and begin thinking about what kind of academic and teacher I want to be.”*

Yasmin Olsen's Fulbright Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Graduate Award took her to Yale University, where she completed a Master of Laws.

*What would you do with a Fulbright?*

## FULBRIGHT NEW ZEALAND GENERAL GRADUATE AWARDS

These awards are for promising New Zealand graduate students to undertake postgraduate study or research at US institutions in any field.

Five awards were granted this year.



### SYNTECHE COLLINS (NGĀTI PIKIAO, TE RARAWA, NGĀTI WHANAUNGA)

Synteché Collins from Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Aotearoa New Zealand, will research Indigenous and survivor-led approaches to combatting human trafficking at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in Honolulu, Hawai'i.

Synteché is the founder of the Pacific Survivor Collective, a member of the Lived Experience Panel of the Global Commission on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and intends to undertake her PhD at Auckland University of Technology (AUT).



### NATHAN JOE

Nathan Joe from Ōtautahi Christchurch will complete a Master of Fine Arts specialising in Playwriting at the Michener Center for Writers, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas.

Nathan graduated with a Bachelor in Broadcasting Communications from the New Zealand Broadcasting School, Ara, in 2012.



### PHOEBE JOHNSON

Phoebe Johnson from Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Wellington will be studying a Performer Composer Master of Fine Arts, at the New School in New York City, New York.

Phoebe graduated with a BMus (Hons first class) in Jazz Performance from Te Kōki, The New Zealand School of Music in 2019.



### MARIA RABINO-NEIRA

Maria Rabino-Neira from Auckland will research how humanitarian exemptions have evolved under international sanctions regimes, especially in counter-terrorism frameworks, at Harvard University, Massachusetts, and the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, Minnesota.

Maria graduated with an LLB in 2015, a Master of Conflict and Terrorism Studies (Hons First Class) from the University of Auckland in 2021, and is now doing her PhD in the Faculty of Law at Victoria University of Wellington.



### ANNA RANKIN

Anna Rankin from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland will complete a Masters of Arts in Journalism with a Politics Concentration at Columbia University in New York City, New York.

Anna graduated with a PGDip in Journalism from Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau Auckland University of Technology in 2014 and an MA in Creative Writing (Non-fiction) from the International Institute of Modern Letters at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington in 2018.

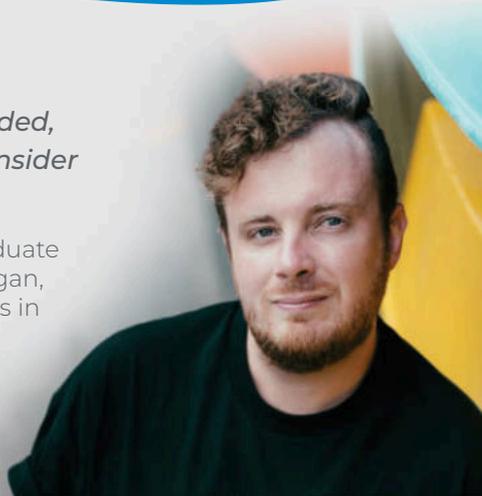
## GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT – JORDAN HAMEL

2022 Fulbright NZ General Graduate Award

*“ I built a community of like-minded, talented, driven peers who I now consider friends and readers for life. ”*

Jordan Hamel’s Fulbright NZ General Graduate Award took him to the University of Michigan, where he completed a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing.

*What would you do with a Fulbright?*



## FULBRIGHT US GRADUATE AWARDS

These awards are for promising US graduate students to undertake postgraduate study or research at New Zealand institutions in any field.

Six US Graduates took up their awards in New Zealand this year.



### MAIAH CLARK

Miah Clark from Iowa City, Iowa will complete a Master of Indigenous Studies with a Pasifika focus at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington.

Miah graduated with a BA in English from the University of Iowa in 2023, and an MLIS from the University of Iowa in 2024.



### ELINOR (ELLIE) FAJER

Elinor Fajer from Littleton, Colorado will research how fungal endophytes can help combat kauri dieback in New Zealand at the University of Auckland and Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research.

Ellie graduated with a BS in Biology and Earth Systems from Stanford University in 2023, and an MS in Earth Systems in 2024.



### BRET HATZINGER

Bret Hatzinger from Doylestown, Pennsylvania will research Meckel Syndrome, a rare genetic disease found in New Zealand’s sheep, at the University of Otago.

Bret graduated with a BS in Biology from Bucknell University in 2024.



**EMILY LAU (KĀNAKA MAOLI)**

Emily Lau from Kaimukī, Honolulu, Hawai'i will complete a Master of Indigenous Studies at The University of Auckland.

Emily graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Mathematics at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.



**NAEISHA (NEI) NGATUVAI-MCCLAIN**

Naeisha Ngatuvai-McClain, from Columbus, Georgia, will research the storying of love, care, and home for LGBTQ+/MVPFAFF+ Pasifika communities at the University of Auckland.

Nei graduated with a BA from Oberlin College, majoring in Sociology and minoring in Africana Studies in 2020, and is currently enrolled as a doctoral student at the University of Pittsburgh.



**TRAVIS RICHARDSON**

Travis Richardson from Peachtree City, Georgia will research the effects of whakamā, or shame, in shaping the experiences of non-Māori learners and speakers of te reo Māori at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington.

Travis is a PhD Candidate in Sociolinguistics at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.

# FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR PROGRAMME

Fulbright New Zealand offers a range of awards to New Zealand and American academics, artists and professionals to research, teach, present their work and gain practical experience in each other's countries.

Awards range from small contributions towards short term visits to fully-funded exchanges of up to one academic year, including airfares, a health benefit plan and programme support.

## FULBRIGHT NEW ZEALAND SCHOLAR AWARDS

These awards are for New Zealand academics, artists or professionals to lecture and/or conduct research in the US for three to five months.

Three awards were granted this year.



**MICHAEL BAKER**

Michael Baker will research the prevention and control of emerging infectious diseases at the Harvard University Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics in Boston, Massachusetts.

Michael is Professor Public Health at the University of Otago, Wellington.



### JEROME NG

Jerome Ng will research how health systems achieve and deliver high quality healthcare and outcomes at Harvard Medical School.

Jerome is Clinical Director: Clinical Governance at Health New Zealand|Te Whatu Ora – Counties Manukau and Honorary Senior Lecturer at the University of Auckland.



### ALBERT REFITI (SĀ AIONO I FASITO'OUTA, AIGA O LEALI'IFANO I VAOVAI, SAMOA)

Albert Refiti will research and write a book title Cosmogonic Artefacts: Spatial Exposition of Pacific Architecture, while being based at the Bard Graduate Center in New York City.

Albert is a Professor of Art, Design and Material Culture at Auckland University of Technology in Aotearoa NZ.

## FULBRIGHT NGĀ PAE O TE MĀRAMATANGA SCHOLAR AWARD

This award is for a New Zealand academic, artist or professional to conduct research and/or lecture in the US for three to five months in the field of Indigenous Development.

One award was granted this year.



### KELLY TIKAO (WAITAHA, KĀTI MĀMOE, KĀI TAHU)

Kelly Tikao from Christchurch will research how native Hawaiian practitioners and traditional healers rejuvenate customary native Hawaiian maternity practices in the hospital and community environments.

Kelly is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Nursing and the Department of Māori Indigenous Health Innovations at the University of Otago, Christchurch.

## FULBRIGHT-CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND PACIFIC WRITER'S RESIDENCY

This award is for a New Zealander of Pacific heritage to carry out work on a creative writing project exploring Pacific Identity, culture or history at the University of Hawai'i, Manoa for three months.

One residency was granted this year.



### SIMONE KAHO (TONGA/PĀKEHĀ)

Simone Kaho from Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) will research wayfinding at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa.

Simone is a writer and researcher for The Taro Patch Creative, in Tāmaki Makaurau

## GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT – MEI PENG

2024 Fulbright NZ Scholar Award

*“The Fulbright Scholar Award has had a transformative impact on both my career trajectory and personal development.”*

Mei Peng's Fulbright NZ Scholar Award took her to the University of California, Davis, where she researched parental decision-making on plant-based food choices.

*What would you do with a Fulbright?*



## FULBRIGHT US SCHOLARS AWARDS

These awards are for US academics, artists or professionals to lecture and/or conduct research in New Zealand for three to five months.

Four US Scholars took up their awards in New Zealand this year.



### JESSE ABDENOUR

Jesse Abdenour, from Seattle, Washington will produce a documentary film and related research about rugby and concussions at Auckland University of Technology.

Jesse is an associate professor in the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Oregon.



### ANGELA COOKE-JACKSON

Angela Cooke-Jackson, from Los Angeles, California, will research reproductive and sexual health among Māori women and gender minorities through a partnership with the Māori scholars in the CARE Center and the Research Centre for Hauora and Health, at Massey University.

Angela is a Professor in the Department of Communication Studies and an affiliate faculty in the Department of Public Health at Cal State, LA in Los Angeles, California.



### SARAH GOFF

Sarah Goff from Amherst, Massachusetts will research health care equity at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington.

Sarah is a Professor in the Department of Health Promotion and Policy at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts.



### ERIC PALKOVACS

Eric Palkovacs from Santa Cruz, California will research the recent diversification and ecological role of rainbow trout in Lake Taupō at the University of Auckland.

Eric is a Professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

## GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT, MATTHEW LACHNIET

2024 Fulbright US Scholar Award



*“The Fulbright experience has been the highlight of my academic career so far. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to establish collaborations with other scientists in New Zealand.”*

Matthew Lachniet's Fulbright US Scholar Award brought him the University of Nevada-Las Vegas all the way to Aotearoa. Based at NIWA, Matthew spent most of his time travelling the length and breadth of the country researching river water Isotopes and climate controls.

*What would you do with a Fulbright?*

# IAN AXFORD (NEW ZEALAND) FELLOWSHIPS IN PUBLIC POLICY

These fellowships, offered by the Ian Axford Fellowships Board and funded by various New Zealand government agencies, are for outstanding mid-career US professionals to research and gain first-hand experience of public policy in New Zealand for three to five months. Fulbright New Zealand administers these Fellowships on behalf of the Ian Axford Fellowships Board.

Three fellowships were granted this year.



## JULIE BUCHWALD

Julie Buchwald, from Santa Monica, California, will provide strategies for enhancing the community engagement strategies currently employed by the Independent Police Conduct Authority, the civilian oversight agency for the New Zealand Police.

Julie is a Special Investigator/Community Relations Coordinator with the Office of the Inspector General for the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners, which provides civilian oversight for the Los Angeles Police Department. She graduated with a JD from the University of Southern California Law School and a BA in Philosophy and International Studies from Northwestern University in Chicago.



## KATHLEEN COCHRANE

Kathleen Cochran from Washington, DC will research “Financing Mechanisms for the Multilateral Development Banks” at the Treasury.

Kathleen is Lead Counsel for Oversight and Senior Counsel, General Counsel’s Office for International Affairs at the U.S. Department of the Treasury in Washington, DC. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Foreign Service from Georgetown University in Washington, DC in 2003, and obtained her J.D. from Columbia Law School in New York, NY in 2008.



## PAUL HOLLAND

Paul Holland, from Arlington County, Virginia, will research ‘Strengthening Climate Resilience within the Indo-Pacific: An Analysis of Best Practices within the New Zealand Ministry of Defence to Achieve Resilient Infrastructure.’ while gaining experience at the New Zealand Defence Forces.

Paul is a Senior Program Analyst with Leidos, where he supports the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Energy, Installations, and Environment. He graduated with a BA in History from Princeton University, New Jersey, and a MSc in Nature, Society, and Environmental Policy from Oxford University, UK.





Above: 2025 Fulbright US Graduate Elinor Fajer out in the field.

*Connecting people. Connecting nations.*



**FULBRIGHT**  
New Zealand

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O AOTEAROA ME AMERIKA

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