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MEDIA RELEASE

Fulbright New Zealand celebrates another record number of grantees



2014 Fulbright New Zealand grantees with Hon Hekia Parata, Minister of Education, and Marie Damour, Chargé d’Affaires ad interim at the US Embassy

Fulbright New Zealand celebrated another record annual cohort of exchange grantees at its annual awards ceremony at parliament last night, the second in successive years. 88 New Zealand and US graduate students, academics, artists and professionals were honoured as Fulbright grantees, 52 of whom attended in person at the prestigious ceremony. This year’s increase is due largely to the commencement of Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching, which will fund two New Zealand and ten American teachers to undergo professional development in each other’s countries.

Speaking as host of last night’s awards ceremony, Hon Hekia Parata, Minister of Education, noted that the Fulbright programme makes a valuable contribution to the professional and academic advancement of all its participants. “I was thrilled to launch the new Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching programme in March with US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. The programme offers life-changing opportunities to some of our best and brightest teachers, allowing them to share their successes, their challenges, and learnings with their US counterparts.”

Marie Damour, Chargé d’Affaires ad interim at the US Embassy in Wellington, said that for many decades the Fulbright exchange programme has contributed to what we now know as ‘citizen diplomacy’. “People-to-people exchanges are by far the most effective forms of diplomacy. The best way of building mutual respect and understanding is to send not just one Ambassador, but dozens, hundreds, thousands abroad and have them make their own impressions and form their own conclusions.”

26 recipients of various Fulbright New Zealand graduate student awards were announced at last night's ceremony. They will study or research in a wide range of fields at the US university of their choice in the coming academic year. Also recognised at the awards ceremony were 11 Fulbright US graduate students who are mid-way through their exchange year in New Zealand, 51 recipients of New Zealand and American scholar awards (for academics, artists and professionals), and three participants in the Ian Axford Fellowships programme which Fulbright New Zealand administers.

Fulbright New Zealand's chairperson Helen Anderson announced at the ceremony that the organisation's executive director, Mele Wendt, will be stepping down later this year after having served 10 years in the role. She commended Mele for serving as the face of the Fulbright programme in New Zealand for the past decade, a period in which award numbers had doubled. The recruitment process for her replacement will begin shortly.

ENDS

For more information about this year's Fulbright grantees see the *2014 Fulbright New Zealand Grantees Booklet* – www.fulbright.org.nz/news-publications/publications/granteesbooklet

Portrait photographs of individual grantees are available on request, as are interviews.

Fulbright New Zealand was established in 1948 to promote mutual understanding through educational and cultural exchanges between New Zealand and the United States of America. The Fulbright programme offers a range of prestigious awards for New Zealand and American graduate students, academics, artists and professionals to study, research, teach and present their work in each other's countries. Fulbright New Zealand offers over 70 exchange awards each year – half to students and half to scholars – and more than 3,000 New Zealanders and Americans have benefited from a Fulbright award to date. The programme is mainly funded by the US and New Zealand governments with additional funding from award sponsors, private philanthropists and alumni donors.

See www.fulbright.org.nz for details about Fulbright awards and how to apply, or download a Media Fact Sheet of further background information here: www.fulbright.org.nz/mediafactsheet

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