



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**University of South Florida Students Receive Prestigious Fulbright UK Summer Institute Award**

Two students from the University of South Florida (USF) have been awarded a place on a Fulbright Summer Institute to study at the University of Exeter on one of the most prestigious and selective summer scholarship programmes operating worldwide.

Both students are Honors College students; Eric Kastelic is a rising sophomore majoring in Geology, and Megan Mascheri is majoring in Environmental Science and Policy. Megan just completed the first year of the Provost's Scholars Program, a professional and personal development program for students to graduate from USF in three years. Eric and Megan have been selected by the US-UK Fulbright Commission to experience the UK on a four-week summer programme focusing on climate change issues in stunning South West England, and is hosted by the University of Exeter.

The Summer Institutes form part of the US-UK Fulbright Commission's work to promote leadership, learning and empathy between nations through educational exchange. The Summer Institute at Exeter will be spent investigating environmental change and its consequences with Exeter's Geography Department, ranked in the top 25 in the world. The University of Exeter is home to a number of globally renowned climate and weather scientists, and the UK's national weather service, the Met Office, is headquartered in the city.

The Fulbright UK Summer Institute Program application process included countless essay revisions and significant mentorship by Dr. Sayandeb Basu, Director of the Office of National Scholarships (ONS), and Ms. Lauren Chambers, Associate Director of ONS. During the application process, both students worked closely with Dr. Basu and Ms. Chambers. Through their guidance, Eric and Megan created concisely competitive applications and honed their narratives to clearly articulate their desire to be among the program participants.

Eric has been involved in undergraduate research working alongside MS student Stephanie Lawlor and under the supervision of Drs. Mark and Kai Rains of the School of Geosciences. The team has been mapping wetland loss in Florida, using Public Land Survey data from 1845 and high-resolution aerial photographs from 1952 and 2004. Their findings are alarming, showing an 80 percent loss of wetland area over that 159-year time period.

Upon learning of her selection for this prominent award, Megan was excited and grateful for the opportunity: "I was ecstatic and immensely honored to have been



selected. This will be my first time ever traveling overseas, presenting the opportunity to immerse myself in a new culture and learn more about myself. As a Fulbright summer programme participant, I will be working alongside students across disciplines to study the impacts humans have on the environment on a global scale. I plan to pursue a career in environmental policy, and I hope this knowledge I acquire through the programme will enable me to make a change in the world on both the environmental and political scale.”

Reflecting on the Fulbright UK Summer Institute award, Eric acknowledges the academic significance of the Fulbright UK Summer Institute to Exeter: “As a Fulbright summer programme participant, I look forward to working with the other Fulbright Summer Institute participants from around the nation during our time in Exeter. The Exeter Region, known for its countless unique geological features, including the Jurassic Coast, gives me further opportunity to include field work during my time as a Geology major at USF. I would like to thank everyone who supported me with the Fulbright process thus far and in the future!”

Fulbright Summer Institutes cover participants’ major costs and provide them with a distinctive support and cultural education programme, including comprehensive pre departure guidance, enrichment opportunities in country and an opportunity to be part of the Fulbright alumni network.

The Commission selects participants through a rigorous application and interview process. In making these awards, the Commission looks not only for academic excellence but a focused application, a range of extracurricular and community activities, demonstrated ambassadorial skills, and a plan to give back to the recipient’s home country upon returning.

Penny Egan CBE, Executive Director, US-UK Fulbright Commission said: “Study abroad is a truly transformative experience for so many of those who are able to participate in it. I know this year’s cohort will make the most of this opportunity to immerse themselves in British culture and I’m sure this experience will leave a lasting impression, on both the Summer Institute participants and on those they meet and mingle with during their time here.”



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**Notes to Editors:**

**About the US-UK Fulbright Commission:**

The US-UK Fulbright Commission was founded by diplomatic treaty in 1948, to foster intercultural understanding between the USA and the UK through educational exchange. It continues to support Senator Fulbright's vision through scholarship and summer programmes, enabling British and American citizens to study, research or teach at universities on either side of the Atlantic.

As part of the EducationUSA network, the Commission offers UK students free, accurate, and comprehensive information about opportunities to study at accredited universities in the USA. The Commission also delivers the Sutton Trust US Programme, designed to help high-achieving, low-income UK students explore US higher education.

**About the UK Summer Institutes:**

Each year, the Commission supports up to 60 US undergraduate students to undertake demanding academic and cultural summer programmes at leading institutions in the UK.

This year we are hosting the following nine Summer Institute programmes at host institutions across the UK: AIFS Summer Institute at Shakespeare's Globe, University of Bristol Summer Institute, University of Exeter Summer Institute, Queen's University Belfast Summer Institute, the University of Westminster Summer Institute, the University of Sussex Summer Institute, the Scotland Summer Institute (at the Glasgow School of Art and the University of Strathclyde), and the Aberystwyth University Summer Institute in Wales. For more information, visit: <http://www.fulbright.org.uk/going-to-the-uk/uk-summer-institutes>.