

MACECE NEWSLETTER

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

To the MACECE Community – current Fulbrighters, alumni, colleagues, partners, and friends: 2023 was busy year for MACECE! All of our programs returned in full force after some difficult pauses and slowdowns due to the global pandemic. We were wholly back on track this year with events, outreach, and grants.

MACECE launched a new diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility initiative in collaboration with Dr. Meriem El Haitami, Fulbright alumna. Over the year, we created trainings for the MACECE team as well as pre-departure and in-country orientation programs centered around understanding and promoting DEI&A principles in new cultural and educational contexts.

MACECE led a group of high school teachers around Morocco during the Teachers for Global Classrooms program in spring of 2023. We hosted our Spanish colleagues in Tangier at the Tangier American Legation for the second half of the Crossing the Straits Program.



Here, we had a chance to explore intersectional research topics between Morocco and Spain. Our very own Spain-Morocco Scholar/Geologist, Dr. Paul Mann, discussed his research on the Strait of Gibraltar, and we had the opportunity to do a tasting of Moroccan and Spanish olive oils and be entertained by a scholar's flamenco performance and another researcher's guitar solo in Spanish and Arabic. We were welcomed at TALIM by MACECE Board Member and friend Jennifer Rasamimanana and her team.

Our Moroccan grantees were busy with their research, studies, teaching, and cultural ambassadorship in the United States. Our FLTAs demonstrated a strong presence at the mid-year conference in Washington, DC this year, all donned in traditional Moroccan clothing and proudly waving the Moroccan flag.

We had scholars and students conducting research all over the United States from Columbia University to the Washington Policy Institute to Texas A&M to UCLA.

Alumni events and initiatives abounded this year as well. A budding “Fulbright Alumni in Morocco” networking group organized meetups in Marrakech, Casablanca, Rabat, and Tangier, bringing together Moroccan alumni and American alumni/current grantees for research discussion, socializing, mentorship and business networking. Moroccan alumni volunteered this year to mentor new applicants to the Fulbright student programs in a new initiative and also served as hosts/city guides for new American grantees who just moved to Morocco.

They volunteered to lead sessions and speak on panels at US Grantee Orientation, to facilitate re-entry and development programs for Moroccan grantees and to serve on selection committees.

Alumni organized academic conferences, speaker series, and social activities to maintain the strong bonds of the Fulbright community in Morocco. MACECE was also pleased to welcome many American alumni home to MACECE for visits including: Jack Carew, Calvin Dark, Gwen Whidden, Sam Metz, Emmanuel Duran, Julie Fouhy, Austin Bodetti, Alex Kolker, Leila Murphy, Brian Edwards, Liz Matsushita, and many others!

Two new staff members joined the Commission team this year. Ayoub Rachdi, came from ENCG Agadir as our new accountant. Alaa-Eddine Khaldi spent some time at UM6P Rabat in program management and joined us in May as Program Officer for our Moroccan student and scholar programs. We also welcomed two new members of the MACECE Board, Nicholas Barnett and Elisabeth Vanness.

In September of 2023, Ms. Aimee Cutrona, Chargé d'affaires at the US Embassy in Rabat and MACECE's Board Chair, Dr. Amine Bensaid welcomed our new cohort of American grantees at orientation. Our scholars and researchers are covering a wide range of topics this year. We have a biologist examining the poisonous venom of African desert snakes and a linguist researching Amazight identity in historical manuscripts. We have 11 English Teaching Assistants who are placed around Morocco from Ouarzazate to Essaouira to Tetouan to teach in our public universities. Several US specialists came to Morocco this year including Dr. Alex Kolker, a US Scholar alumnus who partnered with Dr. Samira Idllalène, a Moroccan Fulbright alumna on a project with Cadi Ayyad University in Safi. Some of our US scholars, researchers and alumni had a chance to meet US Ambassador Puneet Talwar in Marrakech and network with a delegation of former heads of state and Nobel Peace Prize winners at the International Campus of Excellence hosted at UM6P in Ben Guerir. Others shared their research topics and Fulbright projects with students at Al Akhawayn University during International Education Week in the fall.

2023, however, was not without its challenges. In October, a severe earthquake shook Morocco, destroying many villages in the mountains, killing almost 3,000 people and injuring almost 6,000. Our Fulbright community was deeply affected by the loss of colleagues, students, friends and loved ones. In the midst of tragedy, we were inspired by the supportive response and strong sense of community shared by everyone in the country and support sent from around the world. Resilient and collaborative, the Moroccan people came together to reach those in need and the outpouring of assistance was heartwarming. Fulbrighters brought donations of food, blankets, and clothing to the Commission to send out to local villages. Some traveled to the mountains for educational caravans and to help local authorities. Moroccan Fulbrighters in the US started fundraisers and other activities to support those affected, all demonstrating their profound commitment to leadership, community and mutual understanding.

On behalf of MACECE, we send you our sincerest wishes for a healthy, safe, and peaceful new year.
All the best,

Dr. Rebecca B. Geffner

Honorary Co-Chairs



Nasser Bourita

Moroccan Minister of Foreign
Affairs, African Cooperation and
Moroccan Expatriates



Puneet Talwar

US Ambassador

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BOARD MEMBER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank Ms. Kathy Eagen and Ms. Carrie Monahan who served on the MACECE Board and contributed to the success and impact of the Commission. We appreciate the time and efforts they dedicated to Fulbright Morocco.

We would also like to extend a warm welcome to our two newest Board members, Mr. Nicholas Barnett, Public Affairs Officer at the US Embassy and Ms. Elisabeth Vanness, Resident Country Director at the International Republican Institute. We look forward to their valuable contributions and leadership, anticipating the positive impact they will bring to advancing the goals and mission of Fulbright Morocco, fostering connections and building bridges of understanding.

Introducing our newest team members



Alaa-Eddine Khaldi

Program Officer, Moroccan Doctoral Students & Scholars

I am happy to be contributing to MACECE's mission and role in developing and strengthening intercultural exchange in higher education as well as creating a vast network of professionals and scholars between Morocco and the United States! Within this new role, I have the opportunity to challenge myself and improve my skills to build a stronger career within international education. I have been received warmly by a great team and look forward to achieving our mutual goals.

Ayoub Rachdi

Accountant

I am really proud to be a member of MACECE's team, participating in the promotion of cultural and academic exchange between the Moroccan and American governments. In my position, there is always a new thing to discover and skills to develop and improve. I can surely say that I am enthusiastic to continue this journey alongside my colleagues at the Commission.



THE FULBRIGHT CROSSING THE STRAIT SEMINAR



Jointly organized by the Spanish and Moroccan Commissions, the second half of the Crossing the Straits program was hosted in Tangier from April 24th to 27th. The seminar brought together 33 distinguished U.S. scholars and researchers, with 12 based in Morocco and 21 in Spain. The setting at the historic American Legation in Tangier, a venue steeped in the early diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Morocco, provided a fitting backdrop for the rich exchange of ideas. MACECE was pleased to welcome the Spanish guests after having been hosted in Cordoba in 2023 for the first half.

Funded by the US State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs for the fourth time, the seminar aimed to create a platform for grantees to share their experiences and discover intersections of their research in science, the arts, and other disciplines. Panels and workshops portrayed a diverse array of topics, reflecting the participants' varied perspectives. The seminar kicked off with welcoming remarks from the Executive Directors of the Moroccan and Spanish commissions, Dr. Rebecca Geffner and Mr. Alberto Lopez, alongside the Chargé d'Affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Rabat, Ms. Aimee Cutrona, and the Director of the Tangier American Legation, Ms. Jennifer Rasamimanana.

From discussions on environmental issues and ecology to the exploration of Moroccan-Spanish cultural diplomacy through art and literature, the event touched on compelling areas of research. Workshops covered topics such as biodiversity, foreign policy, storytelling in the climate crisis, and language learning across the Strait. The seminar was enhanced by musical and dance performances as well as a Spanish and Moroccan olive oil tasting.



Beyond the formal sessions, the seminar fostered networking opportunities enabling the scholars to forge new connections and build future research collaborations.

The event also emphasized cultural exchange, with participants immersing themselves in the vibrant traditions, cuisine, and hospitality of Morocco through tours of the Tangier medina and the seaside town of Assilah.

“Bilateral enrichment programs such as Crossing the Straits are valuable opportunities for our Fulbrighters to continue to build bridges of mutual understanding between the US, their host countries and their host regions,” said Dr. Rebecca Geffner, MACECE’s Executive Director. “We look forward to our continued collaboration with our friends at the Spanish Commission in the coming years.”





US FULBRIGHT ORIENTATION

In September of this year, MACECE organized the US Grantee Orientation in Rabat, specifically tailored for US scholars, student researchers, and English Teaching Assistants (ETAs). Following this, an intensive training week was designed to empower the ETAs with the tools required for a successful academic year at the university level.

This general orientation event marked a significant milestone for MACECE, being the largest gathering it had orchestrated since the onset of the pandemic. Ms. Aimee Cutrona, the Chargé d'Affaires of the US Embassy extended a warm welcome to the grant recipients in Morocco. Dr. Amine Bensaid, Chair of the MACECE Board, also conveyed his welcome to the American grantees, underscoring the profound significance of educational initiatives in fostering values and strengthening the bond between the United States and Morocco.

To ensure the well-being and security of the grantees, the US Embassy in Rabat organized a comprehensive security briefing session with the Regional Security Officer. This session facilitated the grantees in addressing their concerns as American citizens adapting to a new cultural context and provided them with a platform to ask questions. Additionally, they received intensive crash courses in Darija, acquainting themselves with the local language and customs.

The ongoing US grantees actively participated in diverse panels that delved into the intricate facets of life as Fulbright scholars in Morocco. They shared their experiences in navigating cultural norms, establishing social connections, and surmounting the challenges of acclimatizing to a new environment. Researchers also engaged in insightful discussions regarding research clearance procedures, collaborative efforts with local affiliates, fieldwork logistics, access to archives, and integration into the Moroccan academic landscape.

US FULBRIGHT ETA training week

MACECE was pleased to join forces with the Regional English Language Office again this year to design a robust teacher training week for the 11 newly arrived Fulbright English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) and the four English Language Fellows. The sessions during the ETA training week aimed not only to provide grantees with a comprehensive overview of the Moroccan education system but also to equip them with an array of English teaching resources to prepare for their upcoming classes. Representatives from the ETA host institutions joined the group for the opening event, introducing their respective departments to the new American teachers. The teachers also had the chance to meet Dr. Mohamed Tahiri, a Fulbright alumnus, member of the MACECE Board, and representative from the Moroccan Ministry of Higher Education for an overview on the landscape of higher ed in the country. Training week topics spanned from educational reforms in Morocco, to navigating the 0-20 grading system, to supporting diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the university, to understanding the public university system, among many others. The ETAs and ELF's also had an invaluable opportunity to network with Moroccan teachers and Fulbright Alumni from the FLTA, DAI, and TCLP programs. The teacher training culminated with a farewell gathering, as they embarked on their journeys to their respective host cities spanning from Oujda to Ouarzazate to Agadir the following day, fully prepared and excited to embrace their roles as educators in Morocco.



ETA training week is always very interesting! Each year is different from the other. I like to see how our ETAs challenge their pre-existing notions about Morocco and learn how to adapt to the Moroccan teaching atmosphere, while serving as cultural ambassadors of the United States.



Ikram Boukhari, US Programs Officer



THE POWER OF THE MOROCCAN WHATSAPP NETWORK

by Emily Hayes-Rich

It is the morning of Halloween, October 31, 2022. I wake up at an ungodly hour of the morning; the sun hasn't yet crept over the barren hillsides of the Anti-Atlas. In previous years, I would have celebrated this holiday by eating candy and carving pumpkins, but this Halloween was remarkably different. Two days earlier, I had been given a number for a farmer who lived out in Ait Ouabelli, a community tucked into the Jebel Bani mountain range, which marks the edge of the Anti-Atlas and the beginning of the Sahara. I had called Mahfoud on WhatsApp, explained who I was, and asked him if I could visit. He agreed, and he had told me to arrive on Monday. I was so grateful that I hadn't paused to think about the fact that Monday was October 31. So this year, I spent Halloween in the deserts of Southern Morocco.

I open the front door and step into the narrow alleyway of my apartment in Sidi Ifni. It's so early that our downstairs hanut man hasn't opened up yet. Only the cats are awake, munching on fish skeletons left out for them the night before. My partner Jackson and I walk in the early morning light to our Dacia Logan parked just down the street. The drive from Sidi Ifni to Ait Ouabelli is long. We listen to a mix of traditional Amazigh music and jazz remixes of American pop songs, as these are the choices of the DJ for our favorite southern Moroccan radio station, Azawan.

From Sidi Ifni to Ait Ouabelli, we pass through a dramatic and ancient desert landscape. The acacia trees cast shadows in the morning light, the hillsides are covered in the skeletons of a dying prickly pear cactus, migratory camels cross the road, and the purple hillsides of the Jebel Bani mountain range rise from the flat Saharan landscape. After many hours of Azawan, we finally reach the rural oasis community of Ait Ouabelli. I had yet not confirmed with Mahfoud where to meet, so I instruct Jackson to park in front of the post office, as I know that I can say "post-office" in darija .



I brace myself and hit the call button. Mahfoud picks up.

Me: "Hello! peace be upon you"
Mahfoud: "and peace upon you"
Me: "Are you well?"
Mahfoud: "I am very well? Are you good?"
Me: "I am very good. Thanks be to God"
Mahfoud: "Thanks be to God. And you are not bad?"
Me: "I am not bad. Thank you"
Mahfoud: "And your family is well"
Me: "Yes my family is well. And yours?"
Mahfoud: "Very well thank you"



انا: سلام عليكم.

محفوظ: وعليكم السلام
انا: واش انت مزيان؟
محفوظ: نعم. انا مزيان بزاف. و انت بخير؟
انا: انا بخير. الحمد لله
محفوظ: الحمد لله. و انت لاباس؟
انا: انا لاباس. شكرا
محفوظ: و عائلة دياك بخير؟
انا: مزيان بزاف. شكرا

After several minutes of this customary back and forth, I finally explain to Mahfoud that I have arrived in Ait Ouabelli .

Me: "I am here in Ait Ouabelli"
Mahfoud: "You are here?"
Me: "Yes, I am here in front of the post office. Where are you?"
Mahfoud: "You are in front of the post office?"
Me: "Yes. In front of the post office"
Mahfoud: "Wonderful"



انا: انا ف ايت ويلي
محفوظ: انت هنا؟
انا: نعم. انا قدام البوسطة. فين انت؟
محفوظ: انت قدام البوسطة؟
انا: نعم انا قدام البوسطة
محفوظ: ممتاز

And then he hangs up on me.

Somewhat confused, I look at Jackson and repeat what had occurred. We decide to wait 10 minutes before calling him back, hoping he would eventually join us at the post office. About 10 minutes pass, and just as I am about to call Mahfoud back, my phone rings. But it is a different number?

Confused, I pick up the phone, and a different man's voice from Mahfoud greeted me.

New Man: "Hello! peace be upon you"
Me: "and peace upon you"
New Man: "Are you well?"
Me: "I am very well? Are you good?"
New Man: "I am very good. Thanks be to God"
Me: "Thanks be to God. And you are not bad?"
New Man: "I am not bad. Thank you"



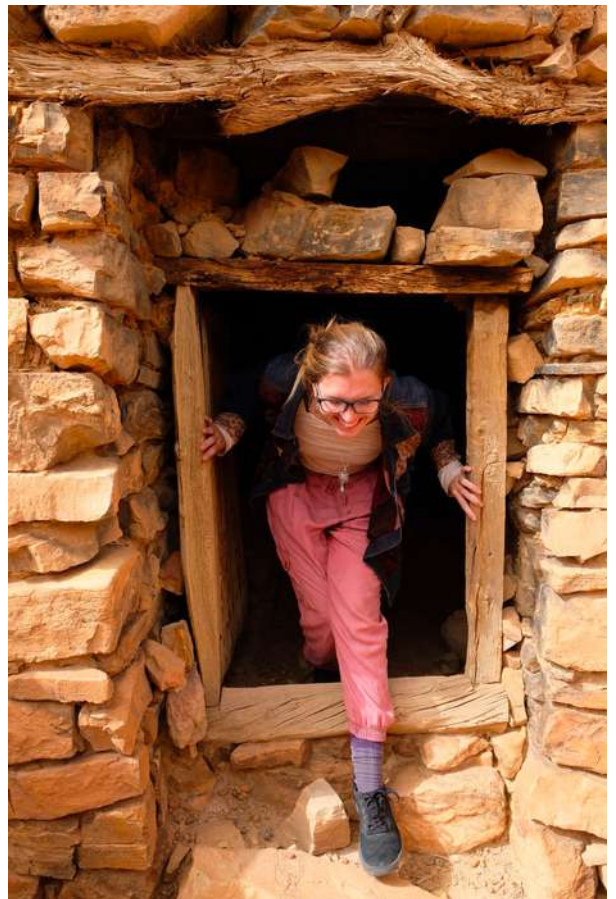
الرجل الجديد: سلام عليكم
انا: وعليكم السلام
الرجل الجديد: واش انت مزيان؟
انا: نعم. انا مزيان بزاف. و انت بخير؟
الرجل الجديد: انا بخير. الحمد لله
انا: الحمد لله. و انت لاباس؟
الرجل الجديد: انا لاباس. شكرا

This new man asks about my parents, and I tell him they were well before asking about his family, who was also well. After what felt like a more thorough and intimate conversation with a stranger than I've had with many lifelong friends, this man finally explains that he is with Mahfoud and asks where I am. I once again explain that I am in front of the post office. He tells me that I should come to the coffee shop. I ask which coffee shop. He responds, "THE coffee shop." Hoping that there is really only one coffee shop in this town, I tell him I will meet him there and say goodbye. Jackson then asks me who was on the phone, and I respond, "I have no idea, but we are meeting him at THE coffee shop."

We drive back towards the only coffee shop in Ait Ouabelli where we did in fact meet Mahfoud and this mystery man (whom I eventually learned was Abdel). We have some tea and bread with Mahfoud and Abdel and the mQddm, and they explain why the tea is so strong in the south. Since the sun was so intense, the tea had to be equally as strong so they had the strength to fight it. They explain that because it rains in the north, the tea there is weak. There is a sense of superiority to their southern tea. It was here in Ait Ouabelli that I contemplate that the only thing stronger than this southern tea (which was starting to make my hands shake), might be the power of the Moroccan WhatsApp network that had brought me to this place to walk through the desert with strangers looking at ancient irrigation systems.

My Fulbright research in Morocco was a community-based archaeological survey of an ancient water management system called the khattara. During my Fulbright, I surveyed 465 khattara systems throughout 96 rural oasis communities in the Guelmim–Oued Noun, Souss–Massa, Draa–Tafilalet, and Marrakech regions. This research aimed to create a holistic understanding of the distribution and usage of the khattara across Morocco. While previous literature indicated that the khattara was an abandoned system used very scarcely throughout the country, the results of my research show that this system is alive and still represents an important part of many oasis water management practices.

When I created this research plan for my Fulbright, it hinged on one terrifying uncertainty: That I could get in contact with people in these rural oases and that they would be willing to chat with me about their ancient irrigation systems. After 6-month of intensive study in Tetouan of darija words related to water, I moved down to Agadir in August 2022 to begin the fieldwork portion of my research. I remember so clearly sitting in a café drinking my mint tea, realizing that this project I had been thinking about and planning for so many years was finally here, and I had to actually do it. And so I took a sip of my incredibly caffeinated tea and began to send out emails and messages to as many people as I could find. As I hit each "send" I prayed and prayed that someone on the other end would respond.



The first response to my “networking” attempt was Mostapha. He’d responded to my email less than 5 minutes after I sent it. He eagerly welcomed me to visit their active *khettara* in the small douar (village) of Imi N’Tizghet near Tafraoute in the Anti-Atlas. So, in mid-September, I made my journey from Agadir towards Tafraoute, where I was supposedly going to meet a man named Mostapha. The fear and uncertainty that gripped me the entire two and a half hour drive is indescribable. Doubts filled my head as I worried that I didn’t speak enough *darija* to communicate, that I wasn’t fully prepared. But truly, nothing could have prepared me for the fieldwork that followed.

While there are many things that I could talk about from my first sets of visits and surveys of the *khettara* (going 20 meters underground with a stranger I had just met after two old men peer pressured him into taking me; suddenly realizing at 11 pm at night that I wasn’t going back to the house to fall asleep but instead Mostapha was taking me to meet the president of Amlen’s local association; the bowl of *hairia* from Atlas Café that gave me life and sustained me through the 17 hour days of survey, interviews, and conversations; the sound of water rushing from these ancient irrigation systems; the taste of *beldi* carrots), the thing that I learned most during these first few days was the magnitude and power of the Moroccan WhatsApp network.

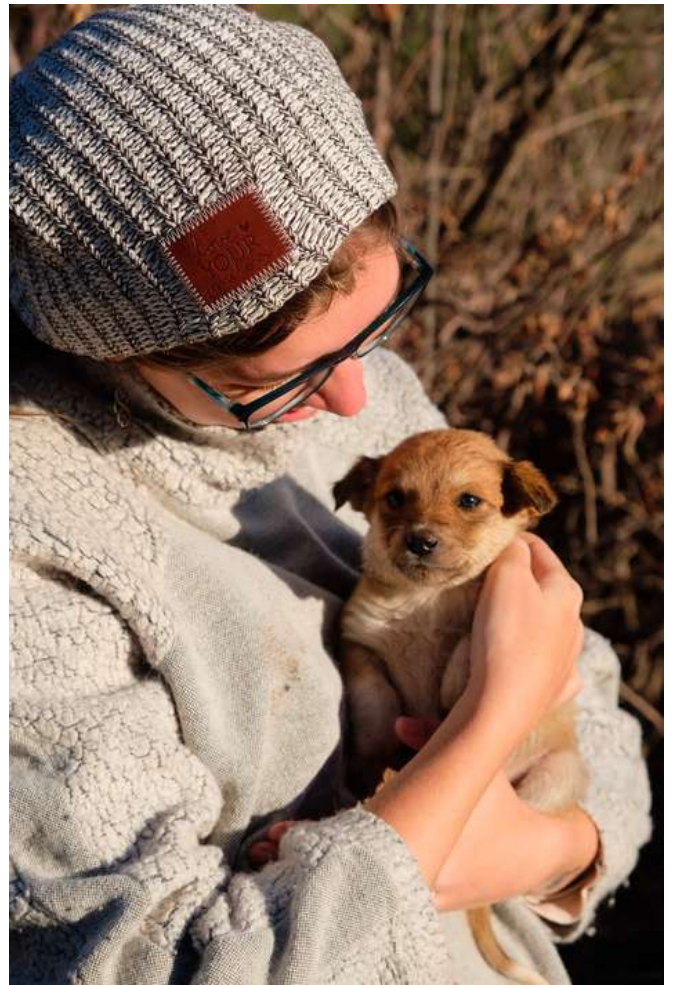
Initially, the plan had been to meet Mostapha and survey the single system in Imi N’Tizghet. Then, my partner Jackson and I would drive towards Tata to meet another contact who responded to my initial emails. However, the second day of our surveys dramatically shifted that. On day two, I met for early morning breakfast with Mostapha at Atlas Café, and he pulled out his phone and began dialing away on his WhatsApp. Before I knew what was happening, a young man named Mohamed showed up and whisked us away to survey the *khettara* in Omsnat, Asguin, and Tazoult. That evening, I sat with Mostapha and his bff Hassan (soon to be my bff). Hassan chattered away on his WhatsApp as I sipped my *hairira*. Again, before I understood what was happening, Hassan explained that he’d meet us early in the morning, and we’d be going to visit the *khettara* down in the Ait Mansour valley.

On day three, we got up, met Hassan, and began the drive. The roads wound their way up and down the dramatic slopes of the Anti-Atlas, and I clutched the seat around every blind corner, convinced an oncoming truck would knock us off the cliff to our death. As we approached the Ait Mansour valley, we saw a group of men picking dates from the trees. Jackson stopped the car and got out, fascinated by the men at least 40 feet off the ground and climbing these date palms barefoot. While Hassan and I stared up at the men in the trees, Jackson started chatting with one of the men on the ground. The man asked him what we were doing in Ait Mansour, and Jackson explained that we were on our way to visit some *khettara* in Talat. The man immediately pulled out his phone, opened WhatsApp, and less than two minutes later had arranged a meeting for us with his cousin who lived just down the road, whose community had two *khettara*. So we drove down the road where the date picker’s cousin greeted us and began to show us his irrigation systems. After almost two hours chatting with these strangers and walking through the date palms staring at the *khettara*, Hassan had to pull us away so we could visit his friends in Talat, who then brought us to their friends/family down the road in Tiouadou.



We returned to Tafroute late in the evening, where we ate three bowls of hairia at Atlas Café. It was close to 11 pm, and I was fading fast, praying I could soon return to my couch in Mostapha's house to sleep. Suddenly, Mostapha greeted a man and pulled up a chair for him at the table. Mostapha turned to me and said, "this is Abdoulah Saadi, I called him this morning, and he has driven out from Agadir and will accompany you to Tata. Along the way, he will show you his village, which has a khattara as well as several others!" I looked at Mostapha and this newcomer, convinced I must have misunderstood the darija. I questioned Mostapha, to which he repeated himself. Yes, this man, a PhD student at the University of Ibn Zohr, had driven from Agadir to Tafroute to join me and Jackson on our khattara journeys, summoned by Mostapha's WhatsApp. And yes, the next day, we went with him to his village of Douar Tinmar, saw the khattara, climbed up to the old historic granaries, saw a wild Chameleon, and then continued on to the towns of Idaw Wasif and Tleta Tagmoute. The following few days, Abdoulah took me all around Tata with his friends, whom, you guessed it, were summoned via WhatsApp.

After my journeys through the deserts with Mostapha and Abdoulah, I returned to Agadir exhausted. It had only been eight days. As I continued my journeys throughout southern Morocco, I frequently contacted Mostapha, Hassan, and Abdoulah. I would mention a region I hoped to visit, and through their network of WhatsApp connections, they would usually be able to find me a friend, a cousin, a friend of a friend's cousin, who would be able to show me around that khattara system. It was through Mostapha and the great Moroccan WhatsApp network that I ended up in Ait Ouabelli this warm Halloween morning—calling a stranger as I sit parked in front of a post office, waiting to see where I will be swept off to.



U.S Researcher Enrichment Seminar

The annual Fulbright Enrichment Seminar for U.S. Student Researchers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region was a remarkable success, creating a lively platform for cultural exchange, academic discourse, and networking. From March 13 to March 16, 2023, Amman, Jordan became ground zero of scholarly collaboration as Fulbright grantees from the MENA region converged to share insights and experiences.

Amman, with its rich history and warm hospitality, was the perfect setting for the seminar. Fulbright U.S. Student Researchers on the cusp of their academic journeys in the MENA region gathered, each bringing unique academic backgrounds and research interests, contributing to the dynamic atmosphere of the event.

The primary aim of the seminar was to foster cross-cultural interactions, enabling participants to gain profound insights into the local customs and traditions of the MENA region. This engagement transcended the academic realm, providing Fulbright grantees with a broader perspective essential for research in a foreign land.

The Annual Enrichment Seminar served as a platform for extensive discussions on research methodologies and findings, covering a wide range of topics, including history, politics, environmental studies, and cultural anthropology. Scholars presented their research and engaged in productive dialogue, expanding their horizons and deepening their understanding of the region.

An exciting aspect of the seminar was the opportunity for Fulbright grantees to establish collaborations with colleagues from various MENA countries, transcending borders and laying the foundation for potential future research projects. With each grantee contributing their unique experiences and perspectives, the potential for impactful cross-border research collaborations is immense.

In conclusion, the Annual Enrichment Seminar in Amman, Jordan, exemplified the power of international education in fostering cross-cultural understanding and global cooperation. Fulbright grantees are well-prepared to make meaningful contributions to their fields and promote mutual understanding between nations, aligning with the Fulbright program's mission.



A glimpse into the life of a Moroccan Researcher in the US

Siham Boumhaouad

Joint-Supervision 2023



My name is Siham Boumhaouad, and I hold a Master of Science degree in Biology of Human Diseases, specializing in Oncology. My academic journey has been closely interlaced with my deep-rooted passion for the biomedical sciences. This profound interest was not only sparked by the intellectual appeal of the subject but also rooted in a deeply personal motivation stemming from my parents' experiences. Regrettably, both of them faced challenging health issues, cancer, and Alzheimer's, triggering an unquenchable curiosity within me to comprehend the underlying mechanisms of these disorders. This narrative of familial struggle and personal interest has significantly influenced my academic trajectory, proving to be both dynamic and diverse.

Driven by an authentic passion for research and fueled by an unwavering dedication to academic advancement, I now find myself on the path to pursuing a Ph.D. in neuroscience at the University Mohammed V Rabat. This journey embodies, for me, more than a scholarly pursuit; it represents a genuine desire to contribute meaningfully to the ever-evolving field of neuroscience.

In my academic pursuits, I have been incredibly fortunate to gather a robust and enriched theoretical knowledge base. This sturdy foundation has not only prepared me for academic rigor but has also paved the way for significant practical experiences. A notable milestone in this journey was being the inaugural student to participate in an international collaboration between Trinity College Dublin in Ireland and the University Mohammed V Rabat in Morocco. This collaboration provided me with the invaluable opportunity to undertake a six-month internship at Trinity College Dublin, a pioneer of innovative research and academic excellence. This experience was part of the Master Exchange program in the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, solidifying my understanding of global research landscapes.

The exposure to international collaborations and advanced research during my time in Ireland has profoundly motivated me to delve deeper into research engagement. As I set my sights on the doctoral endeavor, I felt compelled to seek further enrichment of my knowledge and honing of research skills. It was this aspiration that drove me to apply for the Fulbright program, a suggestion initially proposed by my English professor. Delving into the details of the program, I discovered a connection between its goals and what I aspire to achieve.



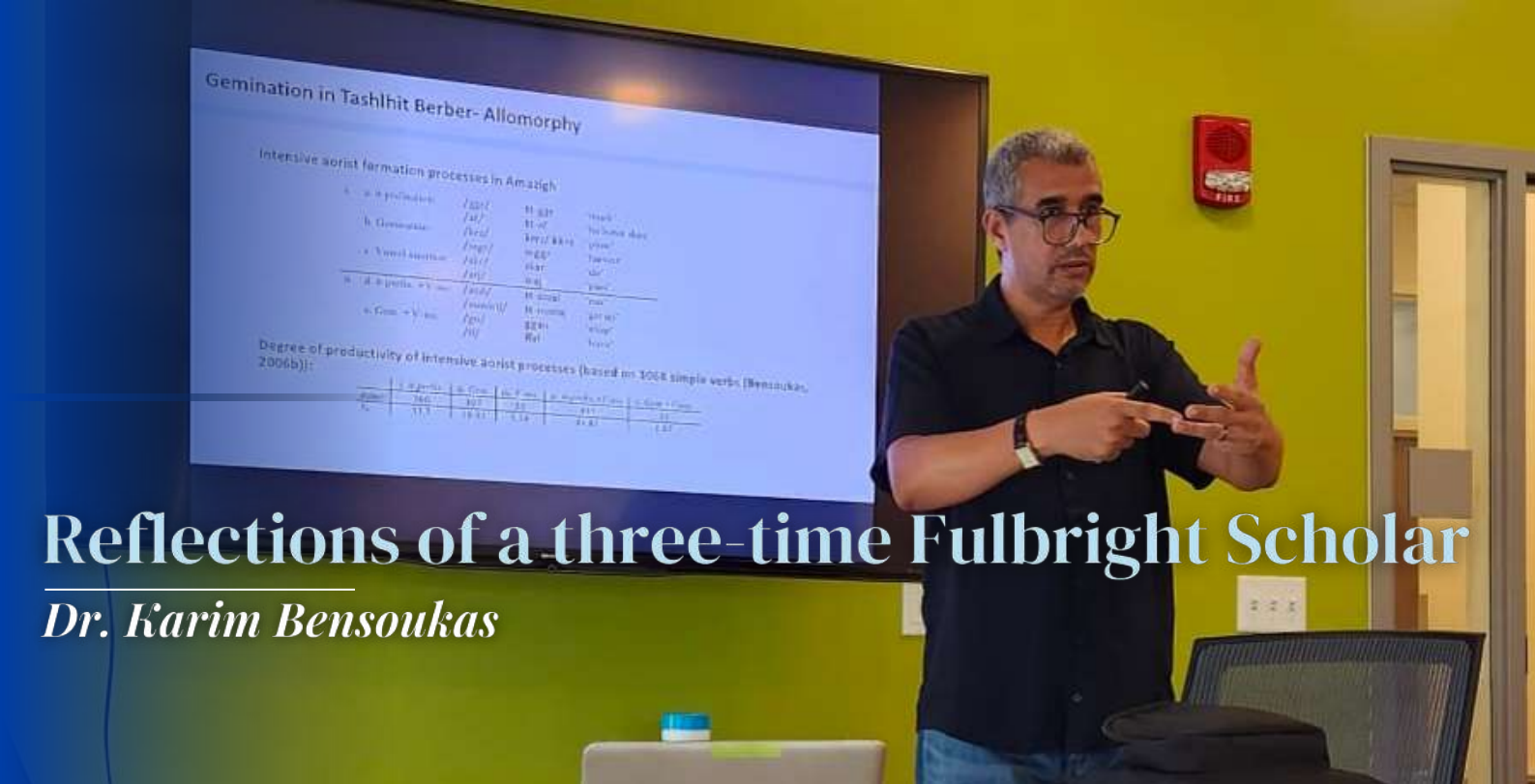
A shared commitment to cross-cultural exchange, academic expansion, and collaboration with esteemed professionals in the United States deeply resonated with my academic ethos. Particularly, the Fulbright mission of fostering mutual understanding and promoting collaboration between nations strongly aligned with my academic values.

Adapting to life in the United States was a surprisingly smooth transition, owing to my open mind and unwavering determination. Quickly acclimating to the cultural, academic, and social dynamics, I engaged with diverse individuals, Fulbright scholars, and immersed myself fully in the academic environment. This immersion significantly facilitated my assimilation and widened my horizons, both academically and culturally.

During my time at Columbia University in the city of New York, I achieved significant milestones in my research endeavors. Notably, I authored two first-author research papers and had the privilege of presenting my work at two international conferences, one in Montreal and the other in Carthage. Additionally, being part of a substantial research lab provided me with the opportunity to actively contribute to six other scientific projects and co-author a fascinating book chapter focused on mitochondrial homeostasis in dopaminergic neurons. This comprehensive engagement with various scientific projects not only polished my academic skills but also expanded my perspectives on neuroscience research, reinforcing my inclination towards neuro-oncology; a field that has perpetually captured my curiosity.

As an emerging researcher, I have collected invaluable insights into the essence of interdisciplinary collaboration, the imperative role of innovative and critical thinking, and the necessity for adaptability in the face of evolving methodologies. On a more personal note, my time in the United States instructed essential life lessons. I learned to cherish resilience, deepen my understanding of diverse cultures, and appreciate the transformative power of effective communication in cultivating lasting relationships. However, this enriching journey was not without its challenges. Navigating a new educational system, adapting to different work and lifestyle paradigms, juggling the demands of a rigorous academic schedule, exploring the city, maintaining a balanced life-work equilibrium, and facing reverse culture shock presented arduous obstacles. Overcoming these challenges necessitated flexibility, persistence, and seeking guidance and support from mentors and peers, ultimately fostering my personal and professional growth.





Reflections of a three-time Fulbright Scholar

Dr. Karim Bensoukas

I am Karim Bensoukas, senior professor in the Department of the English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed V University in Rabat. I hold a Doctorat d'Etat in linguistics (2001), in joint-supervision with the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. I specialize in the phonology and morphology of Amazigh (aka Berber), and I am also interested in the phonology and morphology of Moroccan Arabic. Lately, I have been trying to extend my interest to other Afro-Asiatic languages, including varieties of Amazigh outside Morocco, Standard Arabic and Akkadian. I am also interested in the sociolinguistics of Morocco. I have published in all these areas. I am the editor of *Langues et Littératures* (one of the journals of my institution) and co-editor of the *International Journal of Arabic Linguistics*. I am on the board of other journals, like *Asinag* (IRCAM-Rabat), *Journal of Applied Language and Culture Studies* (FLHS- El Jadida) and *Revue des Etudes Amazighes* (FLHS- Agadir). I am also expert-évaluateur with CNRST-Rabat (this is my second three-year term). I am the winner of the 2014 IRCAM Prize for Research and Scientific Thinking and am the President of the 2022 IRCAM Prize.

I have been on Fulbright on different occasions. My first grant was within the Joint-Supervision program in 1999-2000, when I stayed at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Back in the day, I learnt about the program by word of mouth. In 2005, I received a short term grant, the Fulbright Alumni Development Grant, which allowed me to go back to UMass. In the summer of 2023, I benefited from the Post-Doctoral grant and stayed at Indiana University Bloomington, working on a project on Amazigh Augmentation in an Afro-Asiatic context.

What made me apply for the Fulbright program is not an easy question to answer, so I will talk about both objective and more personal reasons. I start with personal reasons. My early stays in the USA had a very positive impact on me, and I just recall that when I came back from my first stay, I was a different “me” both at the personal and academic levels. It was such an enriching experience in all respects. I learnt how to interact with students and colleagues from different cultural backgrounds. I broadened my knowledge of phonological and morphological theory (and linguistics in general), and I also learnt how to approach language problems differently. I have shared that knowledge with my colleagues and my undergraduate and graduate students. What I learnt at the time was a significant boost to my research, and I managed to complete research projects (in Morocco and in collaboration with colleagues abroad) and publish a good number of papers and a book. From a more objective perspective, Fulbright is a prestigious program that is enriching not only at the academic level but also at the intercultural level.

I didn't find it difficult to adapt in the USA. Probably, my previous experience made it easier. I think I have established a good rapport with my landlord, with my neighbors and with colleagues and students in the department.

I think I have managed to accomplish a number of achievements. The first achievement I accomplished at Indiana University Bloomington is the progress I made in my research project. Most of the goals I set at the beginning of my project were reached. I also had the opportunity to discuss some of my other research with colleagues and give presentations on it. I also managed to present one essential aspect of my Fulbright research project at a conference held at MIT, Cambridge, MA (MorrisHalle@100). It was a conference attended by very influential linguists in the US as well as from outside the US.

I also was somehow a representative of my country, Morocco. Thinking that I flew straight from Morocco, the main organizer of the conference asked me how my travel from Morocco was. She also inquired about some of my colleagues she happens to know. My visit to MIT coincided with the 8th of September earthquake. Both the organizers of the conference and the participants kindly asked if everything was alright after the sad event. Their compassion was quite helpful in my coping with the tragedy that befell Morocco.

Life had to go on. I seized the opportunity of being in the Boston area to visit UMass, Amherst, where I presented some of my research and discussed it with colleagues. It was also a good opportunity to reconnect with some of the colleagues and friends there, including my advisor, who retired a decade ago. Yes, when I think about it again, I made significant advancements in my research. I did substantial library research and managed to get an electronic version one of the expensive books I found it difficult to acquire. I discussed my work with other researchers both at Indiana University Bloomington, MIT, and UMass, which helped me have clearer ideas for future publications related to the project.

I also managed to discuss journal editing with some of the colleagues at Indiana University Bloomington (specifically two colleagues with extensive experience in editing (Journal of Phonetics and Journal of Germanic Linguistics). I also managed to have a discussion with one of the moderators of the Linguist List (Summer Institute of Linguistics), who promised to help us advertise for our journal. My landlord also happens to be in charge of a book review journal, and I discussed his experience in that area with him.

I also attended a few classes. One which I was really interested in is on language documentation. I saw in it a very promising opportunity to promote Moroccan Amazigh and Moroccan Arabic. Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to attend that class till the end of the semester, as my stay came to an end at the end of September.

The achievements are not only at the level of the research, but also at the level of journal editing and networking.

I will end this with the challenges I faced. At the research and personal levels, there were no significant challenges, fortunately. At the logistics levels, it was a bit challenging. Finding housing was very difficult since short-term leases were not available. On campus housing was not available this summer as the apartments meant for scholars like myself were being renovated. I managed to find housing for two months but had to move out in September and look for a place to stay. Luckily, I managed to find hosts, a colleague from Indiana University Bloomington and his wife. The stay with them was great, after all. But that instability was stressful. The weather was a bit challenging, too. It was quite hot during the summer, and the bus system from where I lived (in July and August) to campus was not very efficient.

Accordingly, having to walk for around a half hour in the heat was a daily challenge. On the bright side, I lost a few pounds. Also, at the financial level, I couldn't get dependent support for my family as they couldn't stay long enough (which would be around 80% of the stay) to benefit from the support.

Overall, it was a great stay at all levels. Will I advise my colleagues and students to apply for Fulbright? Definitely!

INTERVIEW WITH A STUDY GRANT ALUMNUS

Anas Akherraz



My name is **Anas Akherraz**. Prior to applying for the Fulbright Study Grant program, I had a Master's degree in Financial Management and Accounting from ENCG Kenitra, as well as 5 years of experience in the banking industry. Passionate about finance and eager to bring about a positive impact, I applied for the Fulbright Study Grant program and went to the University of Cincinnati to pursue a MS in Finance.

What motivated you to apply for the Study Grant Program?

As a finance professional from Morocco, I found strong motivation in the Fulbright Study Grant Program for several compelling reasons. Firstly, Fulbright provides an invaluable opportunity to access world-class educational institutions in the United States, enhancing my knowledge and skills in finance. Secondly, it fosters cross-cultural understanding, a vital asset in today's global economy. Moreover, the Fulbright program was an opportunity to access a global network, expand my career prospects and provide a platform to make a positive impact, not only in Morocco but also internationally.

Lastly, I believed in how transformative living and studying in the U.S. could be, and how impactful it could be on my personal growth and cultural enrichment.

What were the main differences you noticed between living in the US and your home country?

Living in the United States and Morocco presents distinct cultural, social, and economic differences. In Morocco, there is a homogenous culture, with a very strong sense of community and traditional values. In contrast, the US is more diverse and multicultural, with individualism being more emphasized.

However, from my personal experience in Ohio, I thought that both Americans and Moroccans share the same values of welcoming and kindness.

“

LIVING IN THE US HAS EXPOSED ME TO A RICH TAPESTRY OF PEOPLE, IDEAS, AND PERSPECTIVES

Did you face any challenges while spending a year in the US? How did you overcome them?

I actually encountered mostly two challenges during my first month in the U.S. Firstly, adapting to a new cultural environment and educational system was daunting, as norms and teaching methods completely differ from those of Morocco. Secondly, I had to adapt to a much higher cost of living, and navigate through all the bills and expenses while making sure to properly manage my monthly stipend.

As per how I overcame the challenges, I usually use the method of “One step back two steps forward”, in a way that allows me to see the big picture, analyze the challenge, and think of ways I can solve it. I also tried to keep an open mind and constantly reminded myself of my willingness to embrace new experiences, including new challenges and changes I had to adapt to.

What were some of the most positive experiences you had during the Fulbright program?

My 10-month journey in the U.S. unfolded with an array of life-altering moments. Yet, two encounters left an indelible mark on my heart. The first was an enchanting escapade amidst the Great Smoky Mountains in Tennessee. As a fervent admirer of nature, my long-held aspiration to bask in the splendor of the American autumn was fulfilled. Witnessing the yellow, red, and green leaves amidst the breathtaking emerald landscapes was profoundly gratifying.

The second, an unforgettable chapter, transpired within the halls of the University during the spring of '23. While enrolled in a course, I found myself unexpectedly immersed in a project that entailed advising none other than NASA. Though the project bore no connection to Finance, its resonance was profound. It encompassed not only the esteemed nature of the client and the project, but also the captivating nuances of the advisory endeavor, and the remarkable individuals with whom I collaborated.



What do you think are the main benefits of having international studies?

International studies offer a multitude of benefits. Firstly, they foster a deep understanding of diverse cultures, languages, and global issues, promoting empathy and open-mindedness. This exposure personally helped me becoming a more effective global citizen. Additionally, international studies provide academic and professional advantages by offering access to unique educational and research opportunities. It enhances language skills and cross-cultural communication, essential in today's interconnected world. Moreover, international studies contribute to personal growth by building adaptability, resilience, and problem-solving skills, making individuals more versatile and confident in navigating an ever-changing global landscape.

How has your Fulbright experience impacted on your personal and professional growth?

The Fulbright Study Grant experience profoundly impacted my personal and professional growth. On a personal level, living and studying in the U.S. fostered my adaptability skills and independence. It allowed me to broaden my horizons, gain a global perspective, and develop a deep appreciation for diversity. Professionally, this experience offered me the opportunity to enhance my skills in Finance. It also provided valuable networking opportunities, exposure to international business practices, and a chance to collaborate with scholars and professionals from around the world. These experiences not only enriched my resume but also allowed me to develop critical skills in communication, problem-solving, and leadership.

What lessons have you learned as a Fulbright student and as a human during your stay in the US?

As a Fulbright student in the United States, my journey has been a profound learning experience on both academic and personal levels. First and foremost, I've gained a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity and the importance of cross-cultural understanding. Living in the US has exposed me to a rich tapestry of people, ideas, and perspectives, which has broadened my horizons and enhanced my ability to connect with individuals from all walks of life. Additionally, my academic pursuits have been significantly enriched by the resources and opportunities available in the US, fostering intellectual growth and critical thinking. Furthermore, I've learned the value of adaptability and resilience, having to navigate a new educational system and lifestyle far from home. Overall, my Fulbright journey has shaped me into a more open-minded and globally aware individual.

How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge you gained from the Fulbright experience in your career?

The skills and knowledge I gained from my Fulbright experience will be instrumental in my career. The Fulbright program honed my analytical, and critical thinking skills, which are essential tools in the Finance industry. Additionally, the cross-cultural experiences during the Fulbright journey have enhanced my adaptability, communication, and teamwork skills, all of which are highly valuable in Finance, where collaboration and global perspectives are increasingly important. The insights I gained during my time in the University of Cincinnati will enable me to approach financial analysis with a more holistic and international perspective, making me a more well-rounded and competitive professional in the finance sector. Ultimately, I plan to leverage the multidisciplinary skills and global mindset I developed during my Fulbright experience to contribute meaningfully to the finance and banking industry, particularly in the development finance industry.



Do you have any advice for candidates who are considering applying to the Study Grant program?

First things first, I would advise a thorough research about the Fulbright Study Grant program. Don't hesitate to reach out to Fulbrighters on social media to learn more about the program's requirements. I would also recommend to start early to understand the program's deadlines, and eligibility criteria. Craft a compelling and unique application that reflects your personal and academic goals. The essays are an essential component of the application. They should be a reflection of your personal and professional goals, as well as a tool to convince the jury as to why they should select you instead of other candidates. The essays are also an opportunity to emphasize on how your project or study plan aligns with Fulbright's mission of cultural exchange and mutual understanding. Seek guidance and feedback from mentors or advisors to ensure your application stands out.

Highlight your passion for cross-cultural engagement, demonstrate the potential impact of your proposed work, and convey your commitment to being a global ambassador. Lastly, showcase your adaptability, flexibility, and readiness to embrace new challenges and experiences, as these qualities are highly valued in Fulbright candidates.



Fulbright teachers

RE-ENTRY SEMINAR



On September 6th, MACECE held a Re-entry Workshop at ONOMO Hotel in Rabat for teacher returnees. Fulbright FLTAs, DAIs and TCLPs came together to reflect on their diverse experiences in the US. They shared their insights, acquired skills and expertise. They also dwelled on challenges and how they managed to navigate a new and different culture and environment.



On moderating sessions, our Re-entry Workshop moderator, Yassine Abdellaoui said: *"As a Fulbright alumnus, I had the privilege of moderating a re-entry workshop, organized by MACECE, and it was truly a great learning experience. Facilitating discussions on re-integration, challenges and successes among Fulbrighters was both rewarding and insightful. The workshop fostered a supportive environment for reflection, allowing participants to benefit from each others' experiences."*

The transition back into the community wasn't easy for some of the teachers who had difficulty reintegrating and had to experience reverse culture shock which was an unfamiliar terminology to them before embarking on the program.



It was heart-warming to hear participants' stories and feel the impact of the Fulbright program on their personal as well as professional lives. Some participants shared digital photos that highlighted and summed up their whole experience in the US.

“The meeting was informative, insightful and inspiring,” our Fulbright DAI returnee Aziz Maruan highlighted. He went on saying “I exchanged ideas and learning experiences with many Fulbright alumni. I was inspired by many stories, and I am excited to take part in further exchange programmes organized by MACECE and Fulbright Alumni Association.”

At the end of the workshop, participants had an Alumni Engagement session where they were introduced to alumni small grants. They were also encouraged to join and participate in the Fulbright Alumni Association activities.

The Re-entry workshop was a successful event that was cherished and appreciated by the alumni. To conclude, here is a testimonial from Fulbright DAI alumna, Loubna Zohra Aissaoui: "The re-entry workshop was an opportunity to connect the Fulbright family together, help the returnees' smooth transition back to their roles in the classroom besides bridging the Fulbright values namely sharing, understanding and connecting to lived practices through sharing and listening to fresh and old returnees' stories, best practices and memorable moments. Simply put the re-entry workshop was and will always be a great family reunion to share and care".



The workshop fostered a supportive environment for reflection, allowing participants to benefit from each others' experiences.



Dynamic Perspectives: A Dialogue with a US Fulbright DA Michelle Steele

Why did you choose Morocco as the host country for your Fulbright DA grant?

In the United States, I teach French. I wanted to visit a country where my French skills could be useful, and also a place that could contribute new perspectives and ideas to the French curriculum that I teach. I am very interested in the changing role of the French language in former French colonies, and Morocco seemed like a perfect place to learn more about this. I have also been working to de-center France and Europe in general from my French curriculum, and while I've had the chance to visit and study in other Francophone countries, I had never been to Morocco! I knew very little about Morocco, but the more I read about this country's incredible history and rich cultural diversity, I knew I had to learn more and see it all first hand. Lastly, I have never lived in a majority Muslim country before, and personally I learned very little about Islam in general. I was excited to learn more and gain new perspectives about the Muslim faith and way of life.

Could you tell us about any challenges you might have encountered while living in Morocco?

In the beginning, logistics were the biggest challenge. Finding housing, school for my kids, and learning to navigate day to day life in

a new place were probably the biggest challenges.

Has there been any cultural shock while living in Morocco? If yes, could you tell us more about it.

In general, Morocco has been a very easy place for me to adapt to. One bit of culture shock was getting used to the idea of doing everything by talking to someone. In the US, I was very used to everything having a website, shopping online, self checkout at the grocery store, and communicating a lot over email. In Morocco, it has been my experience that to navigate the everyday demands of living life, it is better to talk to people, face to face. Need something and I don't know where to find it? Have a conversation with my Moul Hanout. I know my fruit and vegetable sellers by name, my butcher now recognizes me and waves hello. When my stove ran out of Butagaz, I didn't make a phone call or text someone. I ran downstairs to the cafe where my concierge likes to hang out, found him, spoke with him, and he came and replaced the gas. Even finding a school for my kids happened through word of mouth on a facebook group, not a google search. Professionally too, so many connections have been made through conversations, not through email.

As an introvert, this was hard for me at first...sometimes I don't want to give my life story just to buy an apple or get a taxi ride! BUT I have come to really enjoy and embrace this part of Moroccan culture. I wish the whole world was as gregarious, friendly, chatty, and welcoming as the Moroccans I have met here. If we could all just slow down and talk to each other more, the world would be a better place.

Did your Fulbright program meet your expectations in Morocco? Can you call it a successful Fulbright experience?

This program has far exceeded my expectations! Other alumni warned me that this would be a life changing experience...but I didn't understand to what extent this would be true. For me, it has been extremely successful and rewarding, both professionally and personally. I have learned much more than I ever thought I would, met so many amazing people, and seen so much. One exciting surprise was the chance to learn Moroccan Darija! Before coming, I planned to rely mostly on my French to get around. But learning some Darija seemed like a good opportunity, and I gave it a try. It has been so much fun and completely changed my experience here. The ability to have a basic conversation, make a basic purchase, and get around with even a basic level of Darija has changed the way people interact with me and opened up so many new experiences. I didn't expect to learn much Darija or Arabic, but I am so glad I did!

What are the things that have impressed you most in Morocco and you would take back with you home to share with your acquaintances and community?

The list is VERY long! First, I have to share how kind and welcoming everyone is here in Morocco. I cannot overstate how many people, even total strangers, have been so kind, so welcoming, and gone out of their way to lend a hand with anything I've needed. I've just been so impressed by the kindness and generosity of everyone I have met. Then, the incredible history! As a French teacher, many lessons (in textbooks, etc), often teach about Morocco only within the context of French colonization.



I did not know much of anything about indigenous Tamazight, or the arrival of Arabs in the 8th century. I've learned about the impact of the Phoenicians, Romans, Spanish, and many others here. Morocco has been a nexus between East and West, North and South for thousands of years. I also was not aware of the vast cultural diversity, how many different subcultures and languages are represented here. I think Americans have a lot of stereotypes of North Africa and of Muslims, and I'd like to share what I have learned to break down those stereotypes.

What would be the most memorable part of your DA program in Morocco?

This is so hard to answer! Professionally, it has to be all the amazing teachers I have met. I have had so many rich and wonderful conversations, with so many passionate and dedicated educators, and I have been so impressed and learned so much from everyone. The importance and value of this kind of exchange cannot be overstated. Teachers change the world, and in these kinds of conversations and cultural exchanges, we all grow and learn together.

Personally, it has been watching my 3 kids adapt to life in Morocco. They have grown, changed, and learned so much by living and going to school here. It is just amazing to watch their world view expand and change, and to see how seamlessly they've adapted to life in a new place. They come home from school waving papers with their handwritten Arabic. My daughter's artwork is all Arabesque gates, medina walls, camels, and palm trees. In Minecraft, they build medinas with shops, mosques, and tanneries. They love all manner of Moroccan food, and beg me to take them out for pastilla and couscous! It has been amazing to live this experience through their eyes.

Did you get to travel outside of Rabat during your program? What is your favorite Moroccan city you have seen so far?

Yes! There is so much to see here, we made a big list of "must see" places and have been taking every opportunity to travel. So far, my family has visited Essaouira, Skhirat, Oualidia, El Jadida, Tangiers, Chefchaouen, Fez, Marrakech, Imlil, Moulay Idriss Zerhoun/Volubilis, (I visited Guelmim without my family), and a visa trip to the Canary Islands. It is hard to pick a favorite...Fez may have been my favorite medina, and the high atlas mountains win for my favorite nature spot. Wandering the night market in Guelmim, surfing in Oualidia and hiking in the Rif mountains near Chefchaouen were also highlights for me. Next on our list is Tetouan, Draa valley, Dades, Erfoud, the desert!



What is your favorite Moroccan food?

It is so hard to choose! My family and I love all sorts of Moroccan foods...but I think my all time favorite has to be traditional couscous. Rfissa is a close second! Since I cannot eat almonds, Sesame chebakia are my favorite sweet!

Do you have any plans to return to Morocco after the Fulbright experience?

Well, we must come back for the World Cup! In the shorter term, returning will depend on time and finances, but I know my family would be thrilled to come back to Morocco anytime. We have all enjoyed our time here so much, I have to imagine we will be back for another visit. Maybe someday I will even be able to bring my students here for a trip! I know they would love it!

Personally, it has been watching my 3 kids adapt to life in Morocco. It has been amazing to live this experience through their eyes.

TEACHERS FOR GLOBAL CLASSROOMS



The Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms Program (TGC) is a yearlong professional learning opportunity and short-term exchange for elementary, middle, and high school educators from the United States. Fulbright TGC equips educators to bring an international perspective to their schools through targeted training, experience abroad, and global collaboration.



The 2023 Fulbright TGC Program brought 11 US educators to Morocco on March 6th through 20th to explore and learn about Morocco's culture and education system. The American teachers were hosted by Moroccan teacher alumni during the first week to observe their classrooms, team teach and give presentations about American culture.



During the following week, they attended a multitude of cultural and academic sessions centered around the Kingdom's history, social climate, and cultural diversity. They also went sightseeing to prominent Moroccan monuments and took part in networking events with Moroccan and American alumni.

TGC

Discovering Morocco through food



Discovering a culture often involves savoring its culinary treasures, and the TGC group embarked on a delectable journey during their stay in Morocco!

Beyond merely tasting traditional dishes, they rolled up their sleeves and dived into a hands-on cooking workshop where creativity and chaos were the main ingredients!



My Fulbright Journey: A Transformational Experience of Learning and Growth

Yosra Rguibi

Study Grant 2021-2023



*My Fulbright
experience was a
life-altering journey
that transcended
academic
achievements.*

My Fulbright experience has been a profound chapter in my life. It's a testament to the power of ambition, resilience, and the unwavering belief in one's ability to make a difference. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity, and I carry the Fulbright spirit with me, inspired to continue my journey of learning, growth, and positive impact on the world.

The Fulbright Program is an illustrious opportunity that often finds its way to eager minds through word of mouth. I first heard about this life-altering program from friends. Intrigued by the program, I ventured into researching the program, only to initially conclude that it was a dream beyond my reach.

Upon graduating from Al Akhawayn University (AUI) with a deep sense of curiosity and ambition, I revisited the Fulbright Program requirements. The path to acceptance seemed daunting, but two years later, life had brought about significant changes, both personally and professionally. With newfound confidence and a relentless drive, I decided to take the plunge and apply, convinced that I possessed the qualities of a successful Fulbright candidate. To my immense joy, my application was accepted.

As I penned my Fulbright essay, my vision was clear: I aspired to study at one of America's finest universities, immerse myself in academic and extracurricular activities, and gather invaluable experiences. The acceptance letter from New York University (NYU) was a pivotal moment, the key to unlocking my dreams and ambitions.

My journey at NYU was nothing short of transformative. Majoring in Industrial Engineering, I graduated top of my class. However, my Fulbright experience was about much more than academics. It was a chance to embrace the spirit of a Fulbrighter, an opportunity to learn about other cultures and share my own.

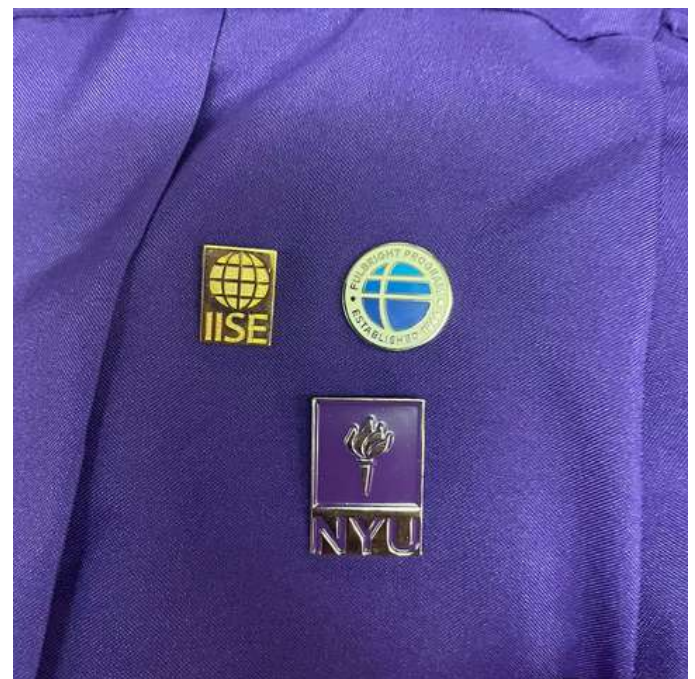
I took the helm as the President of the Institute of Industrial and Systems Engineers (IISE) Club at NYU. Leading the club to a gold award win was a testament to the dedication and hard work of my fellow students. Organizing the IISE North East Region Conference and numerous other events was a privilege that allowed me to contribute to the academic community.

Beyond the classroom and club activities, the Fulbright Program opened doors to explore the vast tapestry of the United States. I traveled to numerous states, uncovering the hidden gems that each had to offer. Yet, the highlight was undoubtedly living in the heart of it all - New York City. The city itself was an experience, an education, and a source of endless inspiration.

My academic training at Philips was a defining chapter of my Fulbright journey. It affirmed my choice of major in industrial engineering and allowed me to collaborate with some of the brightest minds in the field. The experience was not just professionally enriching but also personally rewarding, as it reinforced my commitment to making a positive impact in the world of engineering.

In retrospect, my Fulbright experience was a life-altering journey that transcended academic achievements. It was about learning, growth, and embracing new cultures. It was about leadership, community, and the pursuit of excellence. Most importantly, it was about opening my mind to new horizons and gaining a profound understanding of the interconnectedness of our world.

The Fulbright Program has not only enriched my knowledge but also my character. It has equipped me to be a global citizen, a leader, and a lifelong learner. The invaluable experiences and relationships forged during this journey will forever shape my personal and professional trajectory.



DEI&A INITIATIVE

MACECE was pleased to partner with Fulbright alumna, Dr. Meriem El Haitami in launching a new diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEI&A) initiative. The project included the design and organization of multiple training sessions for the MACECE staff for professional development.

In addition, Meriem also facilitated two sessions for grantees during orientation, Moroccan students getting prepared to travel to the United States and American grantees who just arrived in Morocco. These sessions provided them with valuable insight and specific cultural cues to help them navigate their new environments while understanding the importance of celebrating diversity, supporting equity, and promoting inclusive contexts.

MACECE pledges to continue its commitment to championing the values of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility.



MACECE congratulates our Joint Supervision Grantees who defended this year



DR. TAHA SHISSEH

Taha Shisseh (2019-2020) defended his PhD thesis at the Hassan II University of Casablanca Faculty of Sciences Ain Chock. Taha conducted his research project on Mineralogy, Petrology and Geochemistry of Meteorites at the University of New Mexico.



DR. AYOUB KDIMY

Ayoub Kdimy (2020-2021) defended his PhD thesis at the Mohammed V University in Rabat. Ayoub conducted his research project on Progress in the Studies of Phytochemistry and Therapeutic Potential of Capparis spinosa L. at the University of Mississippi.



DR. WAFAT BOUALLALA

Wafa Bouallala (2019-2020) defended her PhD thesis at INAU in Rabat. Wafa conducted her research project on Street vending and its impact on the urban space at the University of Colorado-Boulder.



DR. MEYSOUN JABRANE

Meysoun Jabrane (2019-2020) defended her PhD thesis at Faculty of Science in Ben M'sik, Casablanca. Meysoun conducted her research in Computational Materials Science at the University of Central Florida.

MACECE congratulates our Joint Supervision Grantees who defended this year



DR. SAFIYA EL GHMARI

Safiya El Ghmari (2021-2022) defended her PhD thesis at the INAU in Rabat. Safiya conducted her research project in Risk Management and Special Development-Urban Sociology at the University of Chicago



DR. HAJAR OUKNIDER

Hajar Ouknider (2021-2022) defended her PhD thesis at the Faculty of Letters and Humanities Ben Ms'ik. Hajar conducted her research project on Inclusive education at Kennesaw State University.



DR. NOUR-EDDINE ECH-CHARFI

Nour-Eddine Ech-Charfi (2017-2018) defended his PhD thesis at FSJES-Agdal, Mohammed V University. Nour-Eddine conducted his research in International Finance at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee.



DR. NOUSSAIR LAZRAK

Noussair Lazrak (2020-2022) defended his PhD thesis at Cadi Ayyad University in Marrakech. Noussair conducted his research in Computer Science and Applied Data Science at New York University.

MACECE congratulates our Joint Supervision Grantees who defended this year



DR. SMAHANE EL HALOUY

Smahane El Halouy (2021-2022) defended her PhD thesis at the Faculty of Sciences and Technology, Cadi Ayyad University. Smahane conducted her research in Applied Mathematics at Kent State University.



DR. IMANE ABOUTAJEDDYNE

Imane Aboutajeddyne (2021-2022) defended her PhD thesis at the Faculty of medicine and pharmacy, Fes. Imane conducted her research project in Engineering education change by design at Arizona State University.

Fulbright Study Grant Cohort 2023



El Mahdi Harmouch,
Master, Public Administration
Pennsylvania State University



Ishak Barikallah,
MS, Data Analytics
Jon M. Huntsman School of Business,
Utah State University



Chaimae Zanafi,
M.S. Industrial Engineering
Northeastern University



Ghizlane Rehioui,
M.S. Data Science
University of Colorado Boulder



Imad Archid,
M.S. Accounting and Finance
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign



Ismail Benseddik,
M.S. Computer Science
Indiana University



Mehdi Daifi,
M.S. Energy Engineering
University of Massachusetts, Lowell



Nadia Khmou,
MBA, Business Administration
Duke University



Hajar Moudni
M.A. Physical Anthropology
University of Colorado



Wafa Bassiouni,
M.A. Landscape Architecture
Texas A&M University



Youssef Mokssit,
M.S. Data Science
Columbia University

Sarah Mrabet
Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Indiana University, Bloomington



Mahmoud Oulad Adime
M.S. Architecture
Ohio State University

Fulbright Joint- Supervision Cohort 2023



Ali Azedou
University of California Davis



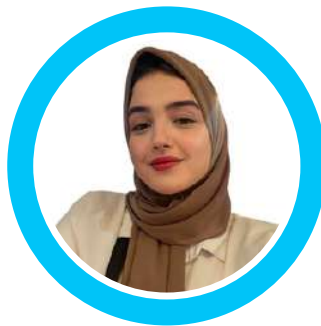
Jawad El Annabi
Purdue University



Narjice Chafai
The University of Georgia



Imane Magrez,
School of Business, Clarkson



Chaimae Harrag
Chaminade University of Honolulu



Oumayma Moufid
Arizona State University



Omayma Mazouji
MD Anderson Cancer Center,
University of Texas



Alae Ben Moummad
University of California Davis



Fatima-Ezzahra Jaida
The Stern School of Business,
New York University

Fulbright Joint- Supervision Cohort 2023

(continued)



Manal Lamouine,
University of South Florida



Zakariae Darhi
Michigan Technological
University



Nawal Taaime
UC Davis Department of Plant
Sciences



Ayman Agharabi
University of Kentucky



Roqaya Diyab
NYU Stern



Salmane Douch
University of Houston

Fulbright Visiting Scholar Cohort 2023



Dr. Ghassane Aniba
Massachusetts Institute of
Technology



Dr. Ouafaa El Garah,
University of Tampa



Dr. Aicha Saad
Florida Gulf Coast

Fulbright Visiting Scholar Cohort 2023

(continued)



Dr. Wiam Ayrir
University of Houston



Dr. Karim Bensoukas
Indiana University



Dr. Mohsine El Ahmadi
The Washington Institute for
Near East Policy



Dr. Brahim Achiou
Yale University



Fatima-Zahra Aazi
University of California, Merced, CA



Rachid Bouabid
Oklahoma State University



Amine Ezzahi
University at Buffalo

FLTA Cohort 2023-2024



Mounya M'rabti
Allegheny College, PA



Yassine Edder
Bennett College, NC



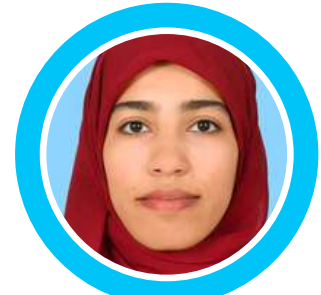
Aziz Ghannaj
University of Pennsylvania, PA



Abdelkader Elkhaoua
Commonwealth University of
Pennsylvania, PA



Fatima Benmessaoud
University of Wisconsin-
Madison, WI



Fatima El Ansari
Bluefield State University, WV



Fedoua Rahmaouy
Williams College, MA



Soukaina Chaouki
University of Georgia, GA



Zakaria Aamou
University of Wyoming, WY



Youssef Bekkali
Wofford College, SC



Youssef Abouni
The College of New Jersey, NJ



Abdellah Lamine
Vassar College, NY

DAI Cohort 2023



Khaoula Goumni
University of Rochester, NY



Fatima Bellihi,
University of Rochester, NY



Oussama Bentaleb,
Vanderbilt University, TN



Az-Eddine Bahfid,
Vanderbilt University, TN

TCLP Cohort 2023-2024



Laila Elbaghazaoui,
Washington Latin Public Charter School,
Washington D.C.



Laila Taik
BELA Brooklyn Emerging Leaders
Academy, New York



Larbi Hachard
Advanced Learning Academy (ALA), Texas

U.S. Student Researchers 2023



Viviana Prado-Nuñez
multi-episode audio series about
Venezuelan migrant-musicians in
Morocco



Yasmine Shereen
Ethnographic research on
several key aspects of Moroccan
culture



Meredith McCain
Processes of linguistic
integration in Morocco via
sub-Saharan African university
students



Natalie Triche
How Article 19 of the 2011
constitution is experienced by
women in the Moroccan
everyday



Reese Hollister
Colonial legacies of tourism
in the Atlas Mountains and
Moroccan Sahara



Faatimah Solomon
Effects of creative practices on
youth mental well-being



Jasmine Al Rasheed
Public health role of Mourchidates
in Morocco



Calvin Schaefer
Evolutionary divergence of three
widespread African snake species

ETAS 2023



Hannah Heisler
Higher School of
Technology Essaouira



Jenna Tuckerman
ISEM & FSJES Casablanca



Grace Rector
FLASH Settat



Kathryn Brouillette
ENSA Tetouan



Mark Schoenknecht

UM6P Rabat



Olivia Dunn

Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in
Marrakech



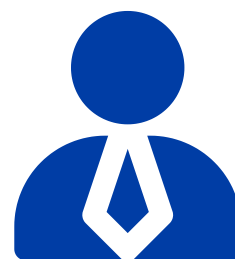
Rachel Beran

Faculty of Medicine and
Pharmacy in Marrakech



Garrett Weinstock

Centre for doctoral studies:
Letters, Arts and Human
Sciences in Fes



Alex DiCenso

Polydisciplinary Faculty in
Ouarzazate



Leo Proctor

FLSH Ben M'sik, Casablanca



Mathew Waugh

Agronomic and Veterinary Institute
Hassan II

Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Short-Term (DAST) 2023



Julia Vaughan

Oujda Academy of Education



Jacqueline Roman

Guelmim Oued Noun Academy
of Education

U.S. Scholars 2023-2024



Dr. Rosemary Admiral
Women's education in premodern
Morocco



Dr. Dris Soulaïmani
Archival work on Amazigh
manuscripts in Rabat and
sociolinguistic research related to
these manuscripts in the regions of
Essaouira and Agadir



Dr. Benaïssa Chidmi
Industrial organization, energy
economics, food marketing and
agribusiness, and consumer
demand.



Dr. Andrea Wyman
Library skills for first-year
experience students: the focus on
utilizing social media,
gamification and ChatGPT to
enhance library research skills



Dr. Khalid Meksem
Developing well adapted soybean
germplasm and the knowledge of
necessary agricultural production
practices needed to the adaption of
soybean by the feed industry in
Morocco.



Dr. Rachel Kann
Ethnomusicological research on the
Moroccan Sephardic Women's
Romancero

U.S. Flex Scholar 2023



Dr. Abdelfattah Berrada
Contribution to Hemp Research in Morocco

Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Research Program (DA)



Michelle Steele
Faculty of Education Sciences

FULBRIGHTER ACHIEVEMENTS AND UPDATES

- **Adil Lachgar (FLTA 2010)**, was appointed as an Assistant Professor of English Studies and Translation at the Faculty of Arabic, Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech.
- **Mohsine Jebbour (FLTA 2015-2016)**, was appointed University Lecturer in Business English at the National School of Business and Management at Moulay Ismail University in Meknes.
- **Mohamed Zakaria Laghmam (FLTA 2020-2021)**, obtained his PhD and has become an Assistant Professor of English and Cultural Studies at Moulay Ismail University in Meknes.
- **Chaymae Halime, (FLTA 2021-2022)**. Has started a new job in September 2023 as an Arabic Professor at Al Akhawayn University. She also published her first book about teaching Arabic language as a Foreign Language at European Universities.
- **Diana Lambert (DA 2021-2022)**, has been awarded a 2023 Virtual Exchange Academy position from the Stevens Institute. Only 100 K-12 and university educators from around the globe are selected for this professional development opportunity.
- **Dr.Yasmine Hasnaoui (2004-2005)** was chosen to be part of Africa Women Experts Committee Network .
- **Amine Mechaal (FLTA 2017-2018)**, was appointed as the Director of Global Engagement, Teachers College, Columbia University in New York in February 2023.
- **Mouad Maarouf (current Study Grantee)**, was elected new President of the RIT Fulbright Association (Rochester Institute of Technology).
- **Laila El Baghazaoui (current TCLP)**, won the Africa teacher's Award along with other 7 teachers and was selected among the top 50 finalists of the Global Teacher's Award.
- **Ahmed Zahlan (current JS grantee)**, was awarded a research grant from The Jerome A. Chazen Institute for Global Business.
- **Jack Carew (US student researcher 2020-2021)**, Started his PhD this year in Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases at Yale University School of Public Health.
- **Lily Haddad (US Student Researcher 2018-2019)**, began her legal career through the Department of Justice Attorney General Honors' Program as a Judicial Law Clerk in immigration court.
- **Anasse Bari (Study Grant 2008-2010)** alongside his colleagues, Nick Greenquist, Doruk Kilitcioglu, unveiled Pyrorank, a nature-inspired algorithm poised to revolutionize AI recommender systems by promoting diversity:
- **Abdelhadi Soudi (Joint-Supervision (1998-1999)** won the Georg Forster Research Award funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.
- **Saad Alami Merrouni (Joint-Supervision 2020-2021)** has started working at the Faculty of Letters and Humanities of Rabat as an Assistant Professor.
- **Diana Lambert (DA 2021-2022)** was invited to give a virtual lecture in the Conference: Leadership in the Digital World in Fes.

ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS CORNER

Majid Hannoum, US Scholar, 2022-2023

Books:

Hannoum, A. (2023). Secular narrations and transdisciplinary knowledge.

Stephanie Willman Bordat, US Scholar, 1991-1992

Book chapters:

Willman Bordat, S.(2023) “Family Codes in Morocco and Algeria”, Family law and gender in the Middle East and North Africa. .

Brittany Landorf, US Student Researcher, 2022-2023

Articles:

Landorf, B. (2023). Gendering madness. Body and Religion, 6(1), 47–73.

Emily Hayes-Rich, US Student Researcher, 2022-2023

Articles:

Hayes-Rich, E., Levy, J., Hayes-Rich, N., Lightfoot, D. R., & Gauthier, Y. (2023). Searching for hidden waters: The effectiveness of remote sensing in assessing the distribution and status of a traditional, earthen irrigation system (khettara) in Morocco. Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports, 51, 104175.

Gwendolyn Whidden, ETA, 2019-2020

Articles:

Federica D'Alessandra, Gwendolyn Whidden (2023). Whither atrocity prevention at the UN? Look beyond R2P and the Security Council. Stimson Center.

Diana Lambert, DA 2021-2022

Articles:

Lambert, D. (2023). Soft skills don't have to be hard: embedding soft skills instruction in Moroccan secondary schools. Journal of Educational Research and Practice, 13(1).

Abelaziz Zohri, Visiting Scholar, 2021-2022

Article:

Zohri, A., & Bogotch, I. (2023). Illusions of Equity: Fulfilled and Unfulfilled Needs of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1–19.

Zaynab El Bernoussi, Study Grant, 2009-2011

Article:

Ibrahim, H., Liu, F., Asim, R., Battu, B., Benabderrahmane, S., Alhafni, B., Adnan, W., Alhanai, T., AlShebli, B., Baghdadi, R., Bélanger, J. J., Beretta, E., Çelik, K., Chaqfeh, M., Daqaq, M. F., **Bernoussi, Z. E.**, Fougny, D., De Soto, B. G., Gandolfi, A., . . . Zaki, Y. (2023). Perception, performance, and detectability of conversational artificial intelligence across 32 university courses. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1).

Dounia Benslimane, Humphrey Fellowship, 2020-2021

Article:

Palladino, M., Jeffery, L., **Benslimane, D.**, & Arfaoui, O. (2023). Compromise and complicity: partnership and interdependence in a global challenges research collaboration. *Global Social Challenges Journal*, 2(2), 127–145.

Jamal El Baz, Visiting Scholar, 2018-2019

Articles:

1. **Baz, J. E.**, Jebli, F., Gissel, A., & Gourdin, K. N. (2023). Harnessing interestingness in supply chain management research: an empirical investigation and research agenda. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/bij-07-2023-0498>
2. **Baz, J. E.**, & Ruel, S. (2021). Can supply chain risk management practices mitigate the disruption impacts on supply chains' resilience and robustness? Evidence from an empirical survey in a COVID-19 outbreak era. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 233, 107972. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2020.107972>
3. Cherrafi, A., Chiarini, A., Belhadi, A., **Baz, J. E.**, & Benabdellah, A. C. (2022). Digital technologies and circular economy practices: vital enablers to support sustainable and resilient supply chain management in the post-COVID-19 era. *The Tqm Journal*, 34(7), 179–202.

Meysoun Jabrane, Joint-Supervision, 2019-2020

Article:

Moussadeq, S., **Jabrane, M.**, Benbella, A., Matrane, I., Badawi, M., Lebègue, S., Kara, A., & Mazroui, M. (2023). Insight into the effect of alloying on the adsorption of benzene on Ag(100) surface: DFT calculations. *Surface Science*, 734, 122321.

Alex Kolker, US Specialist, 2022-2023

Article:

Alex Kolker (2023), A second El Nino? Alex Kolker on an obscure weather pattern's potential effect on storms.

Ahmed Zahlan, Joint-Supervision, 2022-2023

Articles:

1. **Zahlan, A.**, Ranjan, R. P., & Hayes, D. A. (2023). Artificial intelligence innovation in healthcare: Literature review, exploratory analysis, and future research. *Technology in Society*, 74, 102321.
2. **Zahlan, A.**, Ranjan, R. P., & Hayes, D. A. (2023). Artificial intelligence innovation in healthcare: Literature review, exploratory analysis, and future research. *Technology in Society*, 74, 102321.

Aicha Adoui, Joint-Supervision, 2022-2023

Book:

Adoui, A. (2023). International higher education and the rise of soft power as cultural diplomacy.

David Packer, US Scholar, 2019-2020

Article:

Rural Red Clay – an artist's journey through the south of Morocco | Studio Potter. (n.d.).

Building Connections



The MACECE team met with Mr. Mustapha Ijjaali, Interim President of USMBA, Mr. Bouchta El Moumni, President of Université Abdelmalek Essaadi, and Mr. Moulay Lhassan Hbid to discuss Fulbright opportunities and potential future collaborations.



The MACECE team visited the FGSES at UM6P campus in Rabat to discuss Fulbright programs and potential partnerships, and was delighted to meet with Fulbright alumnus Dr. Najib Bounahai.



The MACECE team attended a group meeting of Fulbright alumni who gathered to network and share their Fulbright experience.



The MACECE team visited ISEM in Casablanca to meet with the Director and Professors and discuss future partnership opportunities, thanks to Humphrey alumnus Director Mohamed Briouig who coordinated this visit.



The MACECE team had the opportunity to meet with our colleagues from the Near East Asia Branch of ECA and the Executive Directors from Jordan, Israel and Egypt.



MACECE had the privilege of hosting Ms. Jill Nash, a distinguished member of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board (FFSB), who had the opportunity to engage with Moroccan and American Fulbright alumni and current grantees.

Building Connections



The MACECE team had a chance to meet with our colleagues at IIE and ECA to discuss Fulbright Morocco programs.



The MACECE team organized a group dinner in Marrakech, where current grantees and alumni came together for an unforgettable night of laughter, lasting connections, and incredible stories!



Dr. Rebecca Geffner, MACECE's Executive Director, alongside Directors from other Commissions and the prominent political strategist Donna Brazile at the NAFA conference



As our Fulbright ETAs were preparing to depart to the US, they had one final opportunity to get together and reflect on their teaching experience in Morocco.



A Fulbright Morocco delegation led by the MACECE team participated in the UM6P International Campus of Excellence. The Fulbrighters, Students, Scholars and ETAs, had the chance to meet with Nobel Prize Laureates and former Heads of States. They learned from the guests' unique experience and were inspired to contribute to shaping our ever-changing world.



MACECE's Executive Director and US Programs Officer participated in Fulbright España's Mediterranean Research Seminar where our grantees presented on their research.



Happy New Year!

From everyone at MACECE!