



Promoting the Internationalization of Speech-Language Pathology Education:

The Bulgarian-American Cooperative Experience

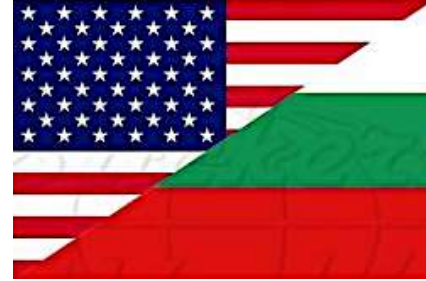
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Presenters



Medical University of Plovdiv



East Carolina University



The European Higher Education Area



Through the **Bologna Process** the *European Higher Education Area (EHEA)* was established in 1999 to:

- ▶ Add coherence to higher-education systems across Europe;
- ▶ Facilitate student and staff mobility;
- ▶ Enhance inclusivity and accessibility of higher education; and
- ▶ Make European higher education more competitive worldwide.

The European Higher Education Area



With 48 European countries participating as part of the EHEA, they have agreed to:

- I.** Introduce a three-cycle higher education system consisting of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies;
- II.** Ensure mutual recognition of qualifications and learning completed abroad at other universities; and
- III.** Implement a system that ensures strong quality and relevance of learning and teaching (EHEA, 2020).

Europe 2020 Strategy document



The **Europe 2020 Strategy document** reinforced the long-term prospects of the EHEA, emphasizing student-centered learning and mobility to “*help students develop the competencies they need in a changing labor market and [to] empower them to become active and responsible citizens.*”

The Erasmus+ Program



The **Erasmus+ Program** was developed by the EU to *facilitate exchanges of students, faculty, and administrative staff with the purpose of improving educational training systems*, while focusing on skills development, employability, institutional development, and the **internationalization** of European higher education.

Medical University of Plovdiv's Strategy for Internationalization



The validation of the modern university as a research and education center that prepares highly qualified specialists that support our current knowledge-based economy.

- The principle aim of the Medical University of Plovdiv's *Strategy for International Cooperation and Strategy of Internationalization*

Medical Speech-Language Pathology at the Medical University of Plovdiv



The MSLP program at MU-P has since received Bulgaria's largest *Erasmus+* grant (120 000 €) to support collaboration with several well-established US institutions of higher education, including Michigan State University and East Carolina University

This work (KA 171 2022-1-BG01-KA171-HED-000074930, 2022–2024) is a direct continuation of 7 previous Fulbright projects (2004–2016) developed within the SWU Stuttering Research Center and coordinated by Prof. Dobrinka Georgieva.

Medical University of Plovdiv Erasmus+



Between 2014 and 2024, the Medical University of Plovdiv supported more than 618 incoming and 696 outgoing exchanges to various countries...

... of which 26 focused on Medical Speech-Language Pathology (2022-2024).

The Fulbright Program



The Fulbright Program promotes US cultural exchange designed to improve international relations and competence between US citizens and other countries through the exchange of individuals, knowledge, and skills.

Fulbright USA-Bulgaria



In 1992, the Bulgarian and US governments signed a 10-year agreement creating the **BG-US Commission for Educational Exchange.**

Since becoming fully operational in 1993, more than 1000 individuals have completed BG-US Fulbright research and academic exchanges.

Medical University of Plovdiv Fulbright Experience



Prior to 2022, the Medical University of Plovdiv had only a single Fulbright research project with the United States.

Between 2022 and 2024 there have been 5 successful Fulbright projects:

1. **Fulbright research grant 2024 - *Improving Speech and Communication Disorders through Evidence-Based Pharmacology Strategies***
Prof. Blase Billack, St. John's University, Queens, NY
2. **Fulbright Senior Specialist 2024 - *Health and Voice: Physiologic Therapy Approaches***, Prof. Maria Ellen Powell, Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC), Nashville, TN, *project number FSP-P009090*

Medical University of Plovdiv Fulbright Experience



3. **Fulbright Senior Specialist Program 2023/2024, *Motor Speech Disorders: Advancing Clinical Excellence (MSD-ACE)***
Prof. Gregory Spray, University of Auburn, Alabama, USA
4. **Fulbright Senior Specialist Program 2022/2023, *Fulbright Advanced Stuttering Treatment***, Prof. Gerald Maguire, University of California-Riverside, USA [not realized because of the Covid 19]
5. **One-year Fulbright English Language Project 2022/2023**
Mrs. Grace Evans, Department of Foreign Language, MU–Plovdiv

Michigan State University



51 000 students
5 700 academic staff

Michigan State University's Mission and Strategic Plan



A main aim of the MSU's Mission and Strategic Plan is to advance the university's international agenda

MSU's **International Studies and Programs** works with the whole of the university to mobilize research capacity, enhance scholarship and educational programs, strengthen international experiences, support foreign language instruction, and build partnerships around the world.

Michigan State University Fulbright Experience



860 Michigan State Fulbrighters

480 MSU researchers who visited other countries

380 Foreign researchers who visited MSU

Michigan State University has been named a top producer of Fulbright scholars for 10 consecutive years

Auburn University



33 000 students
1 400 academic staff

Auburn University Fulbright Experience



- 120** Auburn University Fulbrighters
- 70** AU researchers who visited other countries
- 50** Foreign researchers who visited AU

East Carolina University



28 000 students
2 000 academic staff

East Carolina University Fulbright Experience



- 61** East Carolina University Fulbrighters
- 43** ECU researchers who visited other countries
- 18** Foreign researchers who visited ECU

East Carolina University Mission and Strategic Plan



ECU's strategic plan, ***Future Focused-Innovation Driven***, centers on its commitment to be a national model for student success, public service, and regional transformation. Through education, research, healthcare, community engagement, cultural enrichment and more, ECU enhances the quality of life for its students, its state, and our world.

East Carolina University Mission and Strategic Plan



ECU's plan, supported by the ECU's **Office of Global Affairs**, defines the university's responsibility to ensure the health and wellbeing of the citizens of the US state of North Carolina and its region by:

- Using innovative learning strategies and delivery methods to maximize access; and
- Preparing students with the knowledge, skills and values to succeed in a global, multicultural society.

East Carolina University Focus on Regional Transformation



East Carolina University Focus on Regional Transformation



REGIONAL TRANSFORMATION

- ▶ Health and Well-being
- ▶ Social Advancement
- ▶ Economic Advancement



East Carolina University

Focus on Regional Transformation



HEALTH & WELL-BEING

- ▶ Access to primary care
- ▶ Access to rehabilitation
- ▶ Coordination of services

Medical Speech-Language Pathology program: Previous Bulgarian Fulbright participation

Prof. Georgieva has established collaborative Fulbright partner projects with 6 US universities to facilitate research activities and evidence-based SLP practice in Bulgaria

- ▶ University of Pittsburgh
- ▶ West Virginia University
- ▶ University of Cincinnati
- ▶ Vanderbilt University
- ▶ East Carolina University
- ▶ Minnesota State University



Discussion

From the perspective of the Medical University of Plovdiv, much of the success of the US-BG exchanges has been tied to Medical Speech-Language Pathology's historic development as a dynamic, systematic, and scientific applied health science.

Discussion:

Goals for international collaboration policy

1. Improvement of overall competence of students in SLP Master's and doctoral programs as well as practicing clinicians, increasing knowledge and skills within the areas of fluency and voice disorders; and
2. Development of projects utilizing the US Fulbright Senior Specialist and EU Erasmus+ programs

Discussion:

Goals for international collaboration policy

The special purpose of the Fulbright and Erasmus+ teaching/research exchanges within MU-P was to:

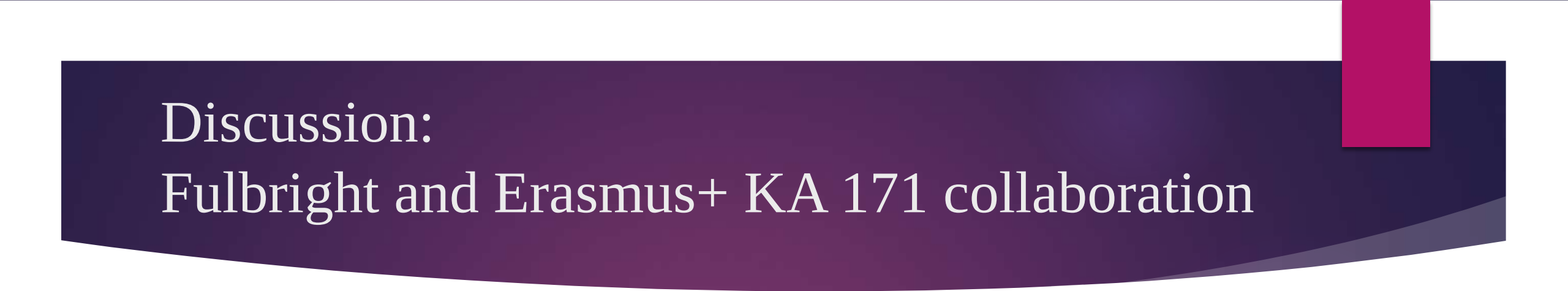
- I. Provide advanced knowledge in existing theories and scientific research through scientifically based teaching; and
- II. Critically evaluate research evidence regarding the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and management of communication disorders.

All activities during the Fulbright and Erasmus+ projects conformed to the accepted framework of research-informed teaching promoted by European universities.

Discussion: Fulbright and Erasmus+ KA 171 collaboration

Five US institutions have collaborated with MU-P between 2022 and 2024

- ▶ During this time, there were 5 Fulbright and 26 Erasmus+ exchanges, involving 31 individuals (24 faculty members and 7 students)
- ▶ These collaborations provided continuing education for students and clinicians with the intent of increasing their knowledge and skills in the areas of MSLP and Pharmacology



Discussion:

Fulbright and Erasmus+ KA 171 collaboration

Further, the MU-P activities were in accord with the Bulgarian National Strategy of Scientific Research with its emphasis on the internationalization of science and education.

Conclusions



Students and clinicians at MU-P received education and training from US faculty who provided important knowledge and evidence-based insight into the etiology, pathogenesis, clinical symptoms and therapy of communication disorders.

Conclusions



- ▶ The Fulbright and Erasmus + programs serve as effective instruments for systemic and long-term impact by supporting innovation and promoting contemporary teaching methods.
- ▶ During the past 2 years, collaboration between MU-P's MSLP program and several US universities have influenced the way educational institutions disseminate research, create valuable international collaborations, and prepare students at the graduate level.

Conclusions



Although the US universities that participated in the Fulbright and Erasmus+ KA107 projects with SWU represented different structures and systems of higher education, all of them shared one essential strategic purpose: *to offer high-quality student education that best prepares them for a successful career as a speech-language clinician.*

Fulbright and Health



The Fulbright and Erasmus+ exchanges served as an effective instrument for gaining an international perspective regarding education and practice in the field of health.

Medical University of Plovdiv's New Perspectives?

Top producing Fulbright institutions in Medical & Health Sciences:



- ▶ Columbia University
- ▶ Harvard University
- ▶ Stanford University
- ▶ University of Pittsburgh
- ▶ Johns Hopkins University

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Our Fulbrighters: Dr. Gregory Spray and Grace Evans



Fulbrighters



During the lectures



MU-P students at MSU



Our students' international experience



Prof. Jeff Searl



Prof. J. Scott Yaruss



Prof. Leigh Cellucci



Prof. Blasé Billack



Dr. Jenna O'Keefe



Prof. D. Deliyski



Thank you!
Благодаря!

