

Rebecca McLaughlin

Florida State University alumna Rebecca McLaughlin, a Madeira School graduate from Falls Church, has received the 2006 French Government English Teaching Assistantship and will be teaching in Nice, France, on the Côte d'Azur this fall.

"Rebecca is among a very small number of truly and exceptionally gifted students I have encountered in my six years of teaching at Florida State University," said Reinier Leushuis, an associate professor of French and Italian at FSU. "She brings a limitless curiosity and appetite for knowledge to class, and her mind is one of the sharpest I have ever witnessed in a student of her level."

As a result of her outstanding performance in French, McLaughlin studied in Paris last year with the support of the 2005 Ada Belle Winthrop-King scholarship.

"That experience opened my eyes to living abroad," McLaughlin said of her Parisian study. "Where I am now was deeply influenced by Florida State and the many study-abroad opportunities that it offers. "

Although McLaughlin's most recent grant is funded by the French government, the award came via the Fulbright Application Process, according to Jody Spooner, director of FSU's Office of National Fellowships. The Fulbright program, the largest international exchange program in the United States, is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.

Assistant Director of the Office of National Fellowships Jamie Purcell said only the highest caliber students with a genuine commitment to cultural engagement are chosen by Fulbright.

"The application process itself is quite a feat," Purcell said. "Students spend months designing a comprehensive and detailed plan for how they will carry out their work abroad. Being awarded a Fulbright grant is an extraordinary distinction and a career-launching opportunity."

Leushuis said McLaughlin's French is outstanding and that by the time he had her in his class, in the last semester of her senior year, it was impeccable.

"There were not only barely any language mistakes left in her writing, but the style and composition of her writing in French is truly the best I have ever seen in my classes," he said.

McLaughlin, the daughter of Kirsten Wetherbee of Columbus, Ohio, and John McLaughlin of Fredericksburg, Va., is currently doing a semester of intensive language study in Paris and hopes to start graduate school in Paris next year. After earning her master's, she plans to find a career in the private sector where she can use her French.

McLaughlin is one of eight FSU Fulbright award winners this year. Half of the school's Fulbright applicants (10 out of 20) were selected as awardees or alternates, with 40

percent (8 of 20) actually winning. This is an even higher yield than most of the nation's top-producing Fulbright schools.

For more on the Fulbright Program's history, scholarships and awards, visit:
<https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about.html>.