

Terence Milstead

Florida State University doctoral student Terence Milstead, a Pensacola Catholic High School graduate, received the prestigious Fulbright Full Grant this year, which he will use to travel to Vilnius, Lithuania, to conduct research for his dissertation, "Housing and Urban Re-Development in a Post-Soviet City: A Case Study of Vilnius, Lithuania."

Charles Connerly, chair of FSU's Department of Urban and Regional Planning, said Milstead's grant is a great honor for both his department and FSU.

"Terence has proposed a first-rate dissertation that will add significantly to our knowledge of housing and housing maintenance in Eastern Europe," said Connerly. "His work will promote the international understanding and knowledge that is key to the Fulbright program."

The Fulbright program is the largest international exchange program in the United States and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. It offers opportunities for students, scholars and professionals to study and conduct research internationally as well as opportunities for university teaching and teaching in elementary and secondary schools worldwide.

Assistant director of FSU's Office of National Fellowships, Jamie Purcell, said the program awards only the highest caliber students with a genuine commitment to cultural engagement, and it has an extensive selection process in the United States as well as in the host countries.

"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."

FSU Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning Rebecca Miles, who is also chair of Milstead's dissertation committee, invited Milstead to join her as a research assistant on a housing and health study requested by the World Health Organization in the summer of 2004. She said Milstead proved to be a quick learner and a meticulous, productive researcher.

"He wrote his master's thesis based on this work and took the lead on a paper that is in the final stages of peer-review at a European housing journal," said Miles. "He is poised to hit the ground running when he gets to Vilnius."

Milstead has been involved with housing issues and community development for years. After graduating from the University of West Florida with a bachelor's degree in English, he worked for the West Florida Regional Planning Council in Pensacola, coordinating citizens' groups that provided input on the city planning processes.

He joined the Peace Corps in 1999 as a community development volunteer and spent two years working in municipal development in Bulgaria. He also spent six months as a Crisis Corps volunteer in Bosnia-Herzegovina, working to provide assistance to women who had been displaced by the war.

Milstead has either lived or traveled in more than a dozen countries, including many in Eastern Europe, and he is fluent in Bulgarian and conversant in Serbo-Croatian.

He earned his master's degree in urban planning and will complete his doctoral degree with a focus on international urban planning next year. In October, he will travel to the Republic of Lithuania in Eastern Europe to finish his dissertation.

Lithuania, the first former Soviet republic to become a member of the European Union (EU), has been changing rapidly since joining the EU in May of 2004. Milstead said that housing in Lithuania was state-owned and controlled from 1945 up until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Housing in Vilnius went from being about 95 percent state-owned in the early nineties to about 95 percent privately-owned today

Because of the rapid process of privatization in Vilnius, Milstead believes this will be a very interesting case study.

"There is a lot happening there in terms of changes that have taken place over the last couple of years since Lithuania became an EU member," said Milstead, "so it presents itself as a unique opportunity for a case study on the various factors that shape a city."

Milstead will examine how privatization of state-owned housing in Vilnius has influenced how its residents feel about, and take care of, their housing environment. He will study how this response to the built environment is mediated or modified by factors such as residents' ethnicity and neighborhood conditions.

He hopes his research work in Lithuania will allow him to observe the social, political and economic context in which urban development is occurring in Lithuania.

"I hope and expect that this experience will inform my broader knowledge base of urban development patterns, not only in cities across Europe and the former Soviet Union, but also elsewhere around the globe," he said. "And, of course, I hope to develop friendships that will continue after I leave."

Milstead 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 this year, with 40 percent (8 of 20) actually winning. This is a higher yield than most of the nation's top-producing Fulbright schools.

Terence Milstead is the son of Harold and Sarah Milstead of Pensacola. For more on the Fulbright Program's history, scholarships and awards, visit: <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/about.html>.

