

Natasha Spencer

Florida State University graduate Natasha Spencer of Tampa has received the prestigious Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, which will send her to Thailand to teach English to middle and high school students.

Spencer, who attended Tampa Bay Technical High School, was awarded the grant by the Fulbright program, the largest international exchange program in the United States.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the program 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.

Spencer, who will be assisting teachers and teaching conversational English classes herself, learned to appreciate other cultures after joining Brooks' Bunch, a program developed by former FSU football player Derrick Brooks, which organizes educational "field trips" for students who perform well in school. She was able to travel to Africa with him and credits the Tampa Bay linebacker for opening her eyes to new cultures at such a young age.

"The experiences gave me a hunger for travel and knowledge about new worlds," she said of the excursions. "Through Derrick's program, I was able to touch things and see things that I believed were in the future of another person's life. I became more open-minded and appreciative of other cultures, which is why I wanted this fellowship."

Spencer has continued to excel in school and was chosen to present the research for her thesis, "Moderate Exercise and the Immune Response in Varying Environments," at the first-ever Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) research symposium at Clemson University April 24, the very first meeting of the 12 ACC universities in that type of forum. She was one of only 16 FSU students selected to present.

Her thesis research examined inflammatory responses in the body as a result of rigorous activity, which can often lead to muscle soreness.

"Through testing at room temperature and then manipulating the temperature in a climatic chamber, I am able to see how environmental temperatures affect that response," said Spencer, "whether it enhances or suppresses it."

Spencer, who majored in exercise science, hopes that her research will help people better understand the different processes and effects that training and temperature levels will have on their bodies.

Now that she has a degree tucked under her belt, Spencer is focusing on preparing for Thailand. She wants to make the most of the experience and contribute to reshaping and rebuilding the recently-flooded nation.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for a cross-cultural experience that will hopefully have an impact on both my life as well as my students' lives," Spencer said of her trip to Thailand. "And I would like to begin an outreach program with my students, sort of like a peer group, to help out any need that my still exist from the tsunami disaster."

Spencer, the daughter of Letitia Spencer-Mosley and John Mosley of Tampa, graduated from FSU this April. She 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.

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