

2024-2025 Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Research Program Colombia Country Profile

Partner Organization: Fulbright Colombia

Eligible Program Dates: 3-6 months from January – June 2025 or September 2025 – February 2026.

Host Institution Expectations: Applicants may propose specific educational organizations or universities that they are interested in partnering with. For those that don't, Fulbright Colombia will help them find a host institution that matches their research objectives.

Language Requirement: None, however some knowledge of Spanish is recommended but not mandatory.

Monthly Allowance: Between \$3,700 - \$4,000 (exact amount to be confirmed at a later date).

Dependent Information: An allowance of \$2,000 per eligible dependent will be provided as part of the Fulbright award. Most school-age children of Fulbright participants attend local schools or participate in Spanish immersion or other programs designed for foreign children. The school search is normally done directly by the Fulbright participants according to their particular needs and preferences. The Fulbright Commission can provide general assistance and guidance in this regard. Tuition fees in private schools can vary between \$400 and \$850 per month.

Country Overview: Located in the northwest corner of South America, Colombia has a rich and complex geography that is shaped by three exuberant branches of the Andes mountain range system and lined by both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. With more than 50 million citizens, Colombia has the second-largest population in South America and is Latin America's oldest and most stable democracy. Colombia is a free market economy with major commercial and investment ties to countries around the world, including the United States.

In the last five years, Colombia has established itself as one of the most rapidly growing and innovative economies in Latin America. The country's natural diversity is comparable to its rich cultural heritage reflecting the indigenous, Spanish, and African origins of its people. This makes Colombian food, music, dance, and art greatly diverse and unique. Colombia's diversity –ecosystemic, economic, social, and cultural– offers an engaging setting for research projects that seek to find solutions to the largest global challenges of our times.

Educational System Overview: In recent years, Colombia has made education a top priority in the country's economic and social development and has invested more resources in this sector than in any other area. Colombia is a country that has made great efforts to offer inclusive and high-quality education for all by implementing policies that have increased the number of hours that children attend school, ensured access to education for children of younger ages, and strengthened the bridge into higher education settings. The country



has also focused on increasing access to higher education for vulnerable and marginalized populations and investing in improving teacher training and development.

Colombia has invested in education as a main driver of transformation in the middle of what is, perhaps, the greatest socio-economic challenge of its recent history: the beginning of the post-conflict and the opening of the country after more than 50 years of war.

Education in Colombia is a right and is mandatory for everyone between 5 and 15 years of age. The education system is structured as follows:

1. *Initial education and comprehensive care for early childhood* starts at birth and continues until the child is 6 years old.
2. *Basic Education* includes grades from 1st to 9th (children from 6 to 14 years old).
3. *Middle Education* lasts for two years, from 10th to 11th grade (15 to 16 years old). Students can study in general academic training programs (academic baccalaureate), vocational training and education programs (technical baccalaureate), or in one of the 137 Teacher Training Schools (*Escuelas Normales Superiores*), which train future preschool and elementary teachers.
4. *Higher Education System*: Upon successful completion of Middle Education, students receive a bachelor's degree and take the national test (SABER 11) in order to enter higher education. There are approximately 316 Higher Education Institutions (HEI), which offer academic and vocational programs. The HEI are divided as follows:
 - Universities (*Universidades*) offer both undergraduate academic programs and graduate programs.
 - University Institutions (*Instituciones Universitarias*) offer professional undergraduate and specialization programs only.
 - Technological Institutions (*Instituciones Tecnológicas*) offer technical programs.
 - Professional Technical Institutions (*Instituciones Técnicas Profesionales*) offer professional training programs for specific jobs.

Colombia has been a great example of innovation in education. In particular, a variety of flexible and non-formal educational models, such as *Escuela Nueva*, have been designed and used in the country for decades. Given its multi-ethnic and multicultural nature, Colombia also has ethno-educational centers, which are schools with majority indigenous populations, and which follow an ethnic education program that is developed in collaboration with the local community.

Possible Topics of Interest for U.S. Educators:

- The implementation of flexible and non-formal educational models
- The Colombian experience in multi-ethnic and multicultural education
- Emergency education and migrant education studies in response to the massive inflow of migrants from Venezuela and the transformation of the education system in the post-conflict scenario
- The implementation and strengthening of bilingual and multilingual education models in rural areas

