

Building Peace through Professional Development:

Peace Scholar Opportunities

The February 2019 issue of the *Rotarian* includes an interesting article entitled “Building Peace by Degrees—How to become a Rotary Peace Fellow (pp. 50-53). Written by Keri B. Lynch, a freelance writer and editor who also works with Rotary International as a PR consultant, it begins with one young man’s story of how he was attracted to “a chance at a second life.”

In 2011, Kiran Singh Sirah, a British-born Sikh, turned 35—“halfway through our life’s journey,” he says, citing Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. Sirah had been living in Edinburgh and Glasgow for a decade, working on a variety of cultural endeavors. Feeling that he had accomplished all that was possible in Scotland, he decided it was time to take his lived experiences to the next level.

It was at this point that Sirah learned about the Rotary Peace Fellowship. Since the program’s inception in 2002, more than 1,200 peace fellows have been awarded fully funded scholarships to study at one of six peace centers at universities around the world. With the help of Rotarians in Scotland, Sirah received one of those scholarships to attend Duke University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He earned a master’s degree in folklore studies as well as a graduate certificate in international peace and conflict resolution.

Sirah’s “second life” was filled with opportunities to build new skills, explore new ideas, and acquire the academic and theoretical knowledge needed to advance his peacebuilding work. Head of the International Storytelling Center in Tennessee, he “believes spinning tales can foster world peace.” (For more information about Sirah, see “Namaste, Y’all” in the February 2019 issue of the *Rotarian*, pp. 44-49.)

The steps for becoming a successful applicant for a peace fellowship (1-4) and securing district support (5-9) are as follows:

Step 1: Determine which of the two fellowship programs offered by Rotary best suits your goals and circumstances.

The **master’s degree program** requires at least three years of relevant full-time work experience and lasts 15 to 24 months, including an applied field experience of two to three months between the first and second academic year. The program is offered at five Rotary Peace Centers based at six universities. Fellows accepted into the program must study at a center outside their home country. The universities are (1) Duke University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States (2) International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan (3) University of Bradford, Bradford, England (4) University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia and (5) Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.

Aimed at candidates with at least five years of relevant full-time work experience, the **professional development certificate program** provides an intensive three-month program in peace and development that includes two to three weeks of field study. It is offered by the Rotary Peace Center at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. (Honorary Rotarian and Midland Chapter President of Nonviolent Peaceforce, Jeanne Lound Schaller, participated in this program in 2015.)

The Rotary Foundation annually awards up to 50 fellowships in *each* of the two programs. The fellowship covers tuition and fees, room and board, round-trip transportation, and all research and field study expenses.

Step 2: Review eligibility requirements and application guidelines.

The fellowship application can be found at the peace fellowship page at Rotary.org. It includes an online tool that helps prospective candidates determine whether they are eligible for a fellowship and whether they meet the basic requirements related to education, language skills, and work experience. Rotary employees, members of Rotary clubs, and the children and grandchildren of club members are ineligible for fellowships.

Fellowships are designed for people with professional experience related to peacebuilding or international development. Candidates must have strong leadership skills and a clear commitment to peace, though what that looks like may vary widely and could include, for instance, work in environmental issues, education and literacy, women's rights, journalism, public health, or disease prevention.

Step 3: Thoroughly research the curriculum at each peace center.

"Each peace center has a different personality," says Summer Lewis, a Kansas native who studied at the University of Queensland from 2011 to 2012. "UQ was rigorous academically. It's a master's in the political science department, so it is heavy on theory versus practice."

"Duke-UNC was suggested to me by the Rotarian committee in Scotland that helped pull my application together," Sirah says (referenced above). I looked into the program and realized they had one of the best folklore studies programs in the United States, if not the world. I also liked the interdisciplinary nature of the program."

Candidates are asked to rank the peace centers in order of preference. For Chance Kalolokesya of Malawi, who will graduate in 2020, this was the easiest part of the application process. "I knew what academic program I wanted to study and what kind of career I was anticipating," he says. "Not every Rotary Peace Center offers the same kind of program, and that's why I chose the University of Bradford," which has the largest department of peace studies in the world.

Step 4: Candidates for the master's degree program should obtain their academic transcripts and test scores.

Candidates for the certificate program will not need these materials, but, like the master's candidates, they will want to update their resumes, gather two letters of recommendation, and craft the required essays. All these materials must be submitted through the online application in English. Candidates must be proficient in English since all coursework is conducted in that language.

When editing her resume, Zimbabwe's Chenai Kadungure, who received her master's degree from the University of North Carolina in 2018, took special care to outline the role of peace in her life. "I had someone help me navigate where my passion for peace was in my resume," she says. "I discovered that, without realizing it, my entire career had been in peace. Don't underestimate each of the little things you do and have done."

As you write your essay, find a theme that tells your story. "If you've done work in a variety of areas that may appear to be diverse, figure out a thread that connects all those jobs and projects," Lewis says. "Show how they relate to each other, how they build on each other, and how they all led you to where you are today. Do so in a way that tells your story rather than regurgitating your resume."

For letters of recommendation, a candidate should choose references who can provide concrete examples of his or her academic, professional, and volunteer achievements, while also describing how the candidate would be a good fit for the peace fellowship program.

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and IELTS (International English Testing System) scores are required for all non-native English speakers applying to the master's program. GRE (Graduate Record Exam) scores are required

for the master's program at UNC and highly recommended at Duke. "Register early for the required exams," says Kadungure. "The number of individuals who can take the test on a particular date may be limited in your area, so contact the testing center in your country as soon as possible."

Step 5: Contact your Rotary district, which will consider your application for endorsement, and request an interview.

Usually the best way to contact a district is through your local Rotary club. Go to Rotary.org and use the Rotary Club Finder to locate clubs in your area. Districts review applications and choose the candidates they wish to endorse.

"Districts can endorse as many candidates as they wish," says Sarah Cunningham, senior marketing programs specialist for the Rotary Peace Center. "There is no charge to districts to apply, nor do they incur any costs if any of their candidates are selected for a fellowship."

Candidates who have trouble connecting with a Rotary club or district should contact Rotary Peace Center staff no later than 15 May. Districts that need help with the process should also contact staff. All questions and inquiries can be sent to rotarypeacecenters@rotary.org. "If your district feels inundated by a large number of applications, reach out to us," Cunningham says. "We can help connect candidates with districts elsewhere that could review and possibly endorse those applications."

As Kadungure discovered, "Finding a club or district to sponsor you can be challenging if you live in an area with fewer Rotarians. Don't hesitate to reach to the peace center staff if you're struggling to make that connection."

Step 6: Submit your completed application to your Rotary district no later than 31 May.

Begin to prepare for your interview by getting to know all about Rotary. "During your interview, demonstrate that you identify with Rotary's specific values," Lewis says. "Talk about how your work ties into the Foundation's six areas of focus and make it clear how your work aligns with Rotary's, and how you can then help Rotary advance its work and impact in the world."

Step 7: District representatives interview candidates.

Among other things, the interview can help determine if a candidate is ready for the program. "I recommend that if at first you don't succeed, sharpen your application, goals, and plans, and apply again," says Lewis, who applied twice before being accepted.

"In the most recent round of applications, 30 percent of finalists had applied previously and not been accepted, and then were accepted this year," Cunningham says. "So determination pays off."

Step 8: Districts must submit endorsed applications by 1 July.

Each year, between July and October, the Rotary Peace Centers Committee, composed of appointed Rotarians and university representatives, screens endorsed and qualified applications and selects fellowship finalists. Districts and their candidates are notified of the results by November.

Step 9: Selected peace fellows apply to their universities.

Being chosen for a fellowship does not guarantee admission to the university. Candidates must apply for admission to their designated universities and meet all admission requirements. Carefully review the admission requirements to ensure that you're prepared. It is recommended that candidates wait to be notified of their selection to

the fellowship before applying for university admission. At Duke-UNC, fellows enroll either in the master's program in international development policy at Duke or in master's programs under various relevant departments and schools at UNC.

Looking to the Future

District 6310 is committed to recruiting and endorsing applicants for the peace fellowship program. Toward that end, we would like to take the initiative and build a pool of prospective applicants who might qualify for a fellowship in the next year or two.

In 2018, to assist clubs and districts, the RI peace center staff added new training sessions at Rotary.org. Peace fellow candidates will find helpful resources there are well. This year, the staff will begin a campaign to increase participation in the endorsement process at the district level. The goal is to have a peace fellowship subcommittee chair appointed in each district by 2020, which should strengthen the peace fellowship program and advance Rotary's peacebuilding efforts.

"The program and course of study helped me refine my ideas, validate my past life and work experiences, and acquire the academic credentials I needed to build the networks to do my work," Sirah says. "It has given me more than 1,200 peace fellows and 1.2 million Rotarians to build partnerships and projects with—and it gave me an international family, the people I spent two intense years living and studying with. Our time together created a binding force we can use to take on some of the world's most pressing challenges."

If you have questions, please contact Gail Hoffman, Midland Noon Rotary; Peacebuilding Committee Chair; District 6310 Peace Scholar Coordinator at gailhoffmanhome@gmail.com. Exciting opportunities await!

Rotary Peace Centers Alumni



Over 1100 alumni since first class graduated in 2004

95% report current work to TRF

88% work in PCPR or one of Rotary's other areas of focus

