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James Oberly receives Fulbright Scholar award to teach and conduct research in Hungary

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EAU CLAIRE — What began as a brown bag lunch for Dr. James Oberly, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire professor of history, has him packing his bags and preparing to spend a semester in Hungary as a Fulbright scholar.

Oberly, who has been a member of the history faculty since 1983, will celebrate his 30th year as a UW-Eau Claire faculty member teaching and conducting research at Karolyi Gaspar University of the Reformed Church in Budapest, Hungary.

"I'll be teaching two classes," Oberly said. "One on American Indian history, a course similar to what our UW-Eau Claire students take. I will also be teaching a course on U.S. immigration history with a focus on the four million persons who emigrated from Austria-Hungary to the U.S."

Oberly, who is currently a visiting scholar at the Columbia University Population Research Center in New York City, said he was inspired to apply for a Fulbright Scholar Award when he attended a brown bag lunch presentation sponsored by UW-Eau Claire's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, where other Fulbright winners shared their experiences.

"The examples of Dr. Mike Dorsher in journalism, Dr. Jill Pinkney-Pastrana in education, and Dr. Kate Mastruserio Reynolds in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) inspired me to seek my own Fulbright," Oberly said. "My department chair, Dr. Kate Lang, encouraged and supported my Fulbright application."

Lang, who has received a Fulbright award for graduate students, said UW-Eau Claire and the history department are extremely fortunate to have Oberly on its faculty. Lang said Oberly is dedicated to both the institution and his students.

"Dr. Oberly is the model teacher/scholar," Lang said. "He has always found creative ways to engage undergraduate students in cutting-edge research. He eagerly takes on innovative projects."

The experience of teaching in a different university setting is just one of the goals Oberly has set for himself.

"I hope I can make lasting friendships and professional relationships," Oberly said. "And of course, I hope to be a good teacher for my Hungarian students."

Oberly will not have a lot of down time when he is not in the classroom, as he has plans for some major research while in Budapest.

"I intend to conduct work at the National Archives of Hungary and the Central Statistical Office on the Hungarian national censuses of 1869 and 1941," said Oberly, who hopes to explore a partnership about digitizing the manuscript census for those two years with colleagues in Hungary, Germany and the U.S.

Lang said Oberly's teaching and research in Hungary will have an impact on both faculty and students when he returns to his UW-Eau Claire classroom.

"The type of experience Dr. Oberly will have with his Fulbright is very important for faculty," Lang said. "Teaching is a more creative process than we sometimes imagine. When faculty are actively engaged in research or teaching in a new context, they are able to bring fresh ideas back to UW-Eau Claire. This benefits not only our students, but other faculty."

Oberly will begin his teaching duties at Karolyi Gaspar University in January, and the Fulbright fellowship runs through May 2013.

Oberly is the sixth UW-Eau Claire faculty member to be named a Fulbright scholar since 2007. The highly competitive and prestigious [Fulbright Scholar Program](#) sends 800 U.S. faculty and professionals abroad each year to lecture and conduct research.

UW-Eau Claire's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs provides a select list of national and international [fellowship opportunities](#) on its website. Faculty and academic staff who are interested in fellowships are invited to contact ORSP for assistance at orsp@uwec.edu or 715-836-3405.

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