

TWO UM EXPERTS AWARDED FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIPS

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The Malaysian-American Commission on Educational Exchange (MACEE), in partnership with the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education and the United States Embassy in Malaysia announced two finalists from Universiti Malaya for the 2024–2025 Visiting Scholar Program which are Associate Professor Dr. Reena Rajasuriar from the Faculty of Medicine and Professor Dr. Siti Nursheena Mohd Zain from the Faculty of Science Universiti Malaya.

The Fulbright Scholar Program is a prestigious international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government, designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and those of other countries.

According to Mr. Curtis Johnson, Executive Director of MACEE, this program is not merely an investment in individual scholars but a pledge to the future – a commitment to the cultivation of global leaders who will drive change, tackle the world's most pressing issues, and shape international discourse through the power of education and research.

"I would like to extend heartfelt congratulations once again to the deserving recipients of Fulbright Scholar Program grants. Additionally, I want to express my sincere appreciation to Professor Dr. Yatimah Alias, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & International) and Professor Dr. Yvonne Lim, Associate Vice-Chancellor and the dedicated Universiti Malaya team from the Academic and International Faculty for orchestrating today's celebration with such precision and support. Let's continue this journey together, fostering more promising stars from Universiti Malaya," he added.

Associate Professor Dr. Reena Rajasuriar, with close to 20 years of experience as a pharmaceutical researcher, will work with counterparts in the U.S. on an impactful HIV study aimed at transforming the clinical capacity of people living with HIV (PWH) in Malaysia. This study seeks to enhance the screening, diagnosis, and management of cognitive impairment in PWH using an easily implementable test tool with potential applicability across other diseases and countries in Asia.

Additionally, the study will provide insights into potential drivers for cognitive decline in low- and middle-income country (LMIC) settings, an area that has been inadequately studied due to the lack of accurate testing tools. Dr. Rajasuriar's pioneering work has been recognized through prestigious fellowships, including the 2016 Loreal-UNESCO National Women in Science Fellowship, the 2018 HIV Research-for-Cure Academy Fellowship, and the 2019 CIRA International Visiting Fellowship by Yale University.

Professor Dr. Siti Nursheena Mohd Zain, a parasitologist with over 25 years of experience, has dedicated her life's work to addressing parasitic infections and their impact on vulnerable communities, including migrant workers, refugees, and the urban poor, in efforts to improve their health literacy. Her Fulbright project aims to contribute to global efforts in combating Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs), advancing the collective understanding of these diseases and improving the lives of those affected in Malaysia and beyond.

Professor Dr. Siti Nursheena's exceptional commitment and expertise have been recognized through numerous accolades, including the Universiti Malaya Excellent Service Awards and the Malaysian Society of Parasitology and Tropical Medicine Natchatram Silver Award in 2014. Both individuals have been selected for their exceptional academic merit, leadership potential, and commitment to fostering international understanding. The Fulbright Program, founded by Senator J. William Fulbright, is renowned for its global impact in promoting educational exchange and mutual collaboration.

Both Dr. Reena & Dr. Siti Nursheena will be representing Universiti Malaya as they embark on this enriching journey. This recognition reflects their dedication to neuropsychology & biomedical sciences, and we are confident that their participation will contribute significantly to the Educational Diplomacy efforts of MACEE and the Fulbright program.

Since MACEE's inception in 1963, Universiti Malaya has sent over 130 Malaysians to the US through a variety of Fulbright programs. Established in 1946 under legislation introduced by Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, the program has grown to become one of the world's most widely recognized and prestigious scholarships. The Fulbright Program operates in over 160 countries worldwide and has provided more than 390,000 participants—chosen for their academic merit and leadership potential—with the opportunity to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to solutions to shared international concerns.