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Illinois Wesleyan Student Offered Fulbright Grant

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Jessica Olsen, a senior at Illinois Wesleyan University, has been offered a Fulbright grant to teach in Germany.

Operating in 150 countries worldwide, the Fulbright Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Envisioned by U.S. Sen. J. William Fulbright in 1945, the program promotes a mutual understanding between people of the United States and other countries of the world. Since its inception, nearly 103,000 Americans have studied, taught or researched abroad with the program.

Olsen received a grant through the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship Program to help improve English language abilities and knowledge of the United States abroad. Through the program, she will spend 10 months teaching in a German high school.

“This is an unbelievable opportunity to explore what the German education system is like,” said Olsen, an English literature major with a concentration in secondary education and a minor in German. “I hope to share ideas and experiences that I can bring back home.” After her time abroad, the Rockford, Ill., native plans to teach junior high or high school in the United States. “Whether I end up teaching English or German, the Fulbright gives me a chance to combine all of my interests and work with students,” said Olsen.

The third Illinois Wesleyan student awarded a Fulbright in the last five years, Olsen was given the prestigious honor of being awarded two Fulbright grants – one to Germany and one to Austria – before choosing to travel to Germany. “To be able to have a choice is a unique and fantastic opportunity,” said Sonja Fritzsche, associate professor of German and Eastern European Studies and Fulbright advisor for Illinois Wesleyan. “The Fulbright application is a rigorous process and extremely competitive – with Germany being one of the toughest spots to land. This is a very high honor for a graduating senior.”

Olsen, who has been studying German for 10 years, has tutored Illinois Wesleyan students in the language. She is a member of the German national honorary society Delta Phi Alpha, the National Residence Hall Honorary and Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity, through which she mentored elementary and junior high school students.