



BENJAMIN DANIEL TURCEA
FULBRIGHT ENGLISH TEACHING
ASSISTANTSHIP TO MONGOLIA



Turcea, a Baltimore-born graduating senior who will earn his bachelor's degree in international studies and philosophy, knows his way around the world, having already studied abroad and volunteered in Uganda, in addition to studying for a semester in Pretoria, South Africa.

But when it came time to decide where he would like to apply to teach English as a Fulbright Scholar he struggled, ultimately choosing Mongolia.

One draw for him was that Mongolia was among the countries that offered opportunities to teach English at the college-level, a daunting task.

“In the past 50 years they’ve used three different alphabets. The Cyrillic alphabet is the most common,” said Turcea, who finds that challenge motivating. He already has started to study that alphabet in preparation for his year at the Mongolian University of Life Sciences in Ulaanbaatar, where he will work in the Foreign Language Department.

The country’s rural lifestyle and Buddhist traditions also intrigue him.

A course called “Philosophy of East and West” at the University piqued his interest in the spiritual tradition that is gaining popularity in the West.

Also growing in popularity is rugby, a rising sport in Mongolia and one close to Turcea’s heart. He played rugby at Archbishop Curley High School in Baltimore.

With a philosophical and language-oriented mind, Turcea, who was editor of *Esprit*, the *University Review of Arts and Letters*, and opinion editor for the student newspaper, *The Aquinas*, also has a place in his heart for manual labor, particularly landscaping. He hopes to perform hands-on service in Mongolia.

“It’s a different kind of work,” he said. “You kind of get out of your head and into your hands. It’s a feeling I itch for.”

In Mongolia, Turcea hopes to volunteer at the Unubrul Children’s Center as a tutor, art teacher and youth coach.

Turcea, the son of Robert and Cynthia Turcea of Baltimore, attended the University on a full-tuition Presidential Scholarship and participated in the University's Special Jesuit Liberal Arts Honors Program. He was also a member of several honor societies, including Alpha Sigma Nu, the National Jesuit Honor Society, of which he was president of the University chapter. He also was a member of Phi Sigma Tau, the philosophy honor society; Pi Sigma Alpha, the political science honor society; and Pi Alpha Theta, the history honor society. He will receive the University's Excellence in International Studies Award at Class Night next week.

He was a retreat-team coordinator and was involved with the F.I.R.S.T. community-service program at the University, where he also logged 800 hours as a consultant in the University's Writing Center.

During his time as a Scranton student, he also volunteered with Habitat for Humanity in Atlantic Beach, Florida, and as a tutor and library manager in South Africa. When he returns to the United States after completing his Fulbright year, he plans to enroll in American University's School of International Service, where he'll pursue a master's degree in ethics, peace and global affairs.