



**RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY**  
**Office of Marketing and Communications**  
**Press Release**  
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## **Ramapo College Alumnus Receives Fulbright Distinguished Teaching Research Award**

MAHWAH, N.J. – Next spring, Ramapo College alumnus Jonathan Lancaster (BA '16, MA '21) will spend three-and-a-half months in Vietnam as a recipient of the Fulbright Distinguished Award for Teaching Research program.

“This is an opportunity of a lifetime for me,” said Lancaster, a social studies teacher at Bergen County Technical High School in Teterboro, N.J., adding that Vietnam was his destination choice. “I’ve always found it interesting that the Vietnam War is taught here in the United States from the domestic point of view – how we, as Americans, remember the war. I’m curious to learn how Vietnam remembers this devastating event in their history. What can we learn from them? That’s what I’m hoping to bring back to my students.”

The prestigious award, sponsored by the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program, provides an opportunity for K-12 educators from the United States to conduct research and engage in other professional learning experiences abroad for three to six months. Participants work on individual inquiry projects on a topic relevant to education in the United States and the host country, take courses at a host university, and collaborate with colleagues on educational practices to improve student learning.

The Fulbright experience also will not be the first foray into travel to Southeast Asia. In 2019, he took a trip to Cambodia and Thailand – an educational vacation, he said. “It was really quite beautiful, and I learned so much.”

Upon arrival in Vietnam in early February, Lancaster will spend up to 14 days in mandated quarantine due to Covid-19 restrictions before embarking on his professional research. Housing

arrangements for the next three months are not yet set, Lancaster said, adding that he contacted other teachers who previously had a similar Fulbright experience. “They assured me that I’ll be able to find an English-speaking realtor who can set me up with an apartment to rent,” he said. “I’m sure I’ll be able to figure it out when I get there.” The tonal Vietnamese language will be a challenge, he said, but he’s trying to learn enough to at least order a meal or go shopping. “I’ll probably need to hire a translator,” he said.

Lancaster, who grew up in Mahwah, said he planned to major in psychology when he entered Ramapo College as a first-year student. However, he was always interested in history. A class with Professor Sam Mustafa convinced him to make the change, he said. “He made history come to life for me and I was totally hooked.” While at Ramapo, he participated in a summer study abroad program in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 2014 sponsored by DIS Study Abroad in Scandinavia. “That was an incredible experience that further expanded my horizons,” Lancaster said.

Lancaster has also received a NEA Foundation Global Learning Fellowship, through which public school educators develop the knowledge and skills to integrate global competency into their daily classroom instruction, advocate for global competency in their schools and districts, and help students to thrive in our increasingly interconnected world. He is one of a select group of educators who engage in monthly calls to share best practices. The fellowship will culminate with a trip to South Africa next July to study the history of apartheid, Lancaster said.

Lancaster earned a Bachelor of Arts in History with a minor in Psychology, earning the 2016 Outstanding Academic Achievement Award in History. He returned to earn a Master of Arts in Education Leadership in 2021. He has published “The Teaching Mirror: Lessons Learned as a First-Year Teacher,” and was selected as a New Leader’s Council Fellow and as a The New York Times Teaching Project Fellow. He served as the Federal Government Relations Co-Chair for the Bergen County Education Association, and is currently involved with the local chapter of the NJEA. His research, “Daring to Discuss: Analyzing Engagement and Equity in High School Discussions” is pending publication.

Established in 1946 and sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, the Fulbright Program is the largest U.S. international exchange program that offers opportunities to students, scholars, and professionals for graduate study, advanced research, and elementary, secondary, and university teaching across the globe.

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Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The College is ranked #1 among New Jersey public institutions by College Choice; is recognized as the state's top college on the list of Best Disability Schools by *Great Value Colleges*; was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *CondeNast Traveler*; and is recognized as a top college by *U.S. News & World Report*, *Kiplinger's*, Princeton Review and *Money* magazine, among others. Ramapo College is also distinguished as a Career Development College of Distinction by CollegesofDistinction.com, boasts the best campus housing in New Jersey on Niche.com, and is designated a "Military Friendly College" in Victoria Media's *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Business Administration, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Technology, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a post-master's Doctor of Nursing Practice.