

## Gilman Alumni Ambassador Program

The Gilman Alumni Ambassador Program is a diverse group of Gilman Scholarship recipients who have studied abroad in various countries around the world. They are official ambassadors of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program, providing presentations and promotional outreach to university and college campuses around the nation to students and advisors interested in learning more about the Gilman Scholarship Program. The Gilman Alumni Ambassadors have been trained by the Gilman Scholarship Program.

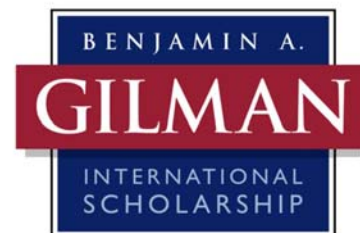
If you would like to request a Gilman Alumni Ambassador to present at your campus or if you are interested in becoming a Gilman Alumni Ambassador, please contact Gilman Scholars by email at [gilman\\_scholars@iie.org](mailto:gilman_scholars@iie.org) if you have any questions.

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## CAROLINA AMESTY, RUSSIA, 2014

University of Central Florida  
Florida



**D**uring the summer of 2014, I had the privilege to study abroad in Moscow, Russia. I studied Contemporary Russian Culture and Politics & Economics in Post-Soviet Russia at Moscow State University. My study abroad experience gave me a better understanding about the complex factors that have shaped Russia's evolution in a modern society.

In addition to the study of Russian politics and culture, I was able to learn and engage in the Russian language. I lived in the main building of Moscow State University with Russian college students. I also visited the cities of Vladimir and St. Petersburg and got the opportunity to see how big and different Eastern

and Western Russia is. The best part of my trip was the ability to interact with the Russian culture, learning their views on America and their political perspectives. Attending Moscow State University introduced me to a different academic environment, allowing me to leave my comfort zone and relate to people I barely understood yet had many things in common with.

On July 4, 2014, thanks to the Gilman Scholarship I was invited to celebrate U.S. Independence Day at the "Spaso House," which has been the house of the U.S. Ambassador since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the former Soviet Union, a unique experience I can never forget. The most significant attribute I gained from my study abroad experience was the knowledge acquired on Russian politics and culture, providing a deep insight into the differences between the eastern and western perspectives.

Receiving the Gilman award not only provided the funds to study abroad but opened a world of

opportunities. Living in Russia for 45 days not only impacted me personally and academically but also professionally. It strengthened my career goals in foreign policy and opened doors to intern for a local U.S. senator who is part of the U.S. Foreign Policy Committee upon my return from abroad.

*"Receiving the Gilman award not only provided the funds to study abroad but opened a world of opportunities."*

I continued to take Russian language classes as well as more courses not just on Russia, but of other Eastern European countries at my home institution. I am currently in the transition of applying to law school to further my studies in International Law. Taking this direction will allow me to pursue my dream career in Foreign Policy and International Affairs.

### FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

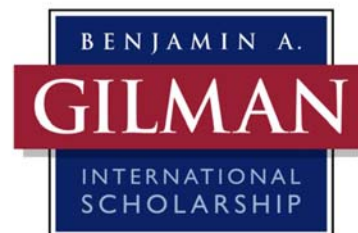
My project was to promote the Gilman Scholarship at my home institution at that time, Seminole State College. My goal was to make more students aware that it exists by visiting every political science class and attending every campus study abroad fair in the fall of 2014. As part of my project, I had the

privilege to inform the Board of Trustees and President McGee from Seminole State College on the importance of every student being globally aware by having a strategic study abroad experience during their college years. I informed them that studying abroad is not impossible for community college

students and how the Gilman Scholarship is a door of opportunities for them. It had a great impact on the students, faculty and myself for a Hispanic community college student like me to be a living example of being granted a prestigious study abroad scholarship.

## NADINE CHANNAOUI, BOLIVIA, 2008

Brandeis University  
Massachusetts



**W**hen I selected a study abroad program, the two features I sought were the opportunity to improve my Spanish skills and to learn from a country developmentally different from the United States. The School for International Training (SIT) offers a program in Bolivia that beautifully laces those two features together. At the time, travel had not been part of my life, and while I was incredibly eager to get started, I was also intimidated by my capacity to integrate into the culture, program, and academic environment. For me, being awarded with the Gilman Scholarship served as a reminder that, not only was I capable of accomplishing the semester abroad, but that the experience could potentially be monumental in my development as an individual.

Monumental it was. My time abroad exposed and strengthened so many qualities of myself, perhaps most importantly how to be patient with myself and with others. I had to be patient when I could not express myself fully in Spanish, and I had to practice patience when the pace of Bolivian society did not compare to that of the U.S.

*"For me, being awarded with the Gilman Scholarship served as a reminder that, not only was I capable of accomplishing the semester abroad, but that the experience could potentially be monumental in my development as an individual."*

During the semester, I lived with a Bolivian host family and took classes with a group of students from different U.S. institutions. Our courses focused on culture and development and were led by Bolivian experts in the topics that were addressed. I was exposed to academic interests I did not know I had and ended up changing my major from

Health Science to Psychology upon my return to the U.S..

My favorite and most influential experience abroad was writing a children's book about Bolivian emigration as my independent study project. Not only was the field work of talking and doing art work with children richly rewarding, but the process of getting the research into the format of a publishable children's book was fun and exciting. This project ended up spear-heading my application for a Fulbright grant, which I was awarded and completed the year after I graduated.

Since studying abroad, I have pursued a career as a cancer genetic counselor. In addition to counseling patients about their risks to carry a hereditary cancer syndrome, I have found ways to tie in my passion for international perspectives. For example, during graduate school I created a novel clinical rotation in Spain and wrote my thesis about communicating difficult health diagnoses to relatives in other countries. I currently serve as the Chair of the Cultural Competency Sub-Committee for the National Society of Genetic Counselors.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

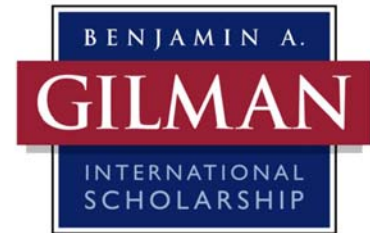
For my Follow-on Service Project, I presented at my home university about the bilingual children's book I wrote while I was abroad. I discussed the experience of completing field work, writing the story, illustrating, and getting the book published. Since

the Gilman Scholarship helped make my study abroad experience possible, it inevitably promoted my ability to write the book. In my presentation I explained the Gilman Scholarship, my time abroad, and how to get involved. I continue to present and

distribute my children's book, which is part of a series called *Kids' Books Bolivia*.

## BRIENNÉ COATES, BRAZIL, 2015

Georgia Institute of Technology  
Georgia



**R**eceiving the Gilman International Scholarship has given me a great opportunity to travel, learn, and experience life in the largest Latin American country: Brazil. It has been quite rewarding! I studied Portuguese and Afro-Brazilian Culture at a local university in Salvador, Bahia, while living with a home-stay family. As a dual degree student enrolled at Spelman College and Georgia Institute of Technology majoring in mathematics and industrial engineering respectively, studying abroad initially seemed out of reach. However, with a proactive approach, funding, and support from family, participating in a Brazil summer study abroad quickly became a reality. It has always been a goal, especially for my personal

and professional development. I gained a broader perspective of the history of Brazil, the people, and unique cultural practices. I also obtained first-hand knowledge of the similarities and differences between the U.S. and Brazil. Exploring a new language and culture was enlightening because it provided insight into my role and purpose as a student and global citizen. The opportunities are endless given the chance to share ideas, create bonds of friendship, and even find solutions to overcome life's challenges, internationally. It's amazing to see how language influences and embodies cultural perceptions around the world. Two months of practicing Portuguese helped me to become more fluent. This acquired skill has opened up new career options, motivating me to explore new volunteer and service learning projects. I truly enjoyed traveling to various cities and sites to learn more about the origins, religion, and the livelihood of Brazilians. The English exchange student leaders embraced us as they helped coordinate our group trips. I realized that through travel we go

merely beyond existing; we connect through language and culture and as we all strive for well-being. Born in Guyana, I was pleased to see that the energetic spirit of celebration and inclusiveness of festivals such as Carnival is a shared sensation. Making history as we speak, the U.S. and Brazil working together is key to making progress and achieving liberty and justice for all. When we have discussions about race, police brutality, lack of education, and STEM opportunity, or what's best for both countries socially, politically, and economically, we become critical thinkers who have the capacity to make change: globally, side-by-side.

***"Exploring a new language and culture was enlightening because it provided insight into my role and purpose as a student and global citizen."***

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

I am creating a memoir for my project that will be shared with my school's study abroad department and to promote study abroad within student organizations on campus. Giving back to my community in this way allows me to encourage other students like myself to study abroad and seek

available resources, especially, the Gilman Scholarship.

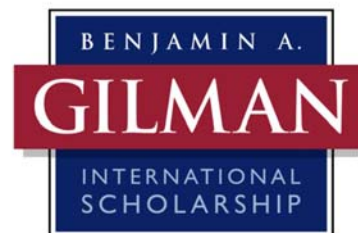
The goal of my project is to promote and increase awareness about international education. In capturing my journey, expectations, and the reality of studying abroad, I hope to inspire and motivate

individuals looking to pursue their own foreign adventure. I am truly grateful for my homestay experience in Brazil. As an incentive, it is instrumental in fostering unity and bonds in an even larger community.



# SUSANNE DEKEYREL, IRELAND, 2015

Weber State University  
Utah



In the summer of 2015, I spent 8 weeks studying abroad in Galway, Ireland. During those weeks I studied both medieval architecture and medieval archaeological methods in the Galway Archaeological Field School in connection with the National University of Ireland, Galway.

My experience with the study abroad program enabled me to learn how to examine and note the differences in medieval architecture; a skill that I previously had no knowledge of, which gave me the ability to feel confident in developing a future

interest and ability that will enhance my professional life.

My Methods of Medieval Archaeology course allowed me to follow an interest in the subject of archaeological excavations. Most of my work revolved around data entry and cataloging the variety of remains that were found at our excavation site, as well as basic troweling and samples of dirt colorations, building floorplans, and geographical coordination. Some of the most significant aspects of my studies included daily trips to a variety of local sites around Ireland that enabled me to note the connections between the past and the present culture that were strengthened by discussions with locals.

My academic and personal experiences enabled me to face my disabilities on a new level that allowed me to not feel so limited by them. Due to my loss of vision, the most impactful accomplishment on this study abroad trip was that I

learned that even if you do not have a disability, you should not limit yourself to what you think you cannot do.

What I gained from my study abroad experience as a whole is that I now have a sense that I am pursuing the correct field for myself and have developed a much stronger sense of accomplishment and self-confidence within myself when it comes to facing new experiences, places, and cultures, which are basic principles of my chosen field.

*"What I gained from my study abroad experience is.. a much stronger sense of accomplishment and self-confidence within myself when it comes to facing new experiences."*

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

Through the aid of the Gilman Scholarship, I feel very privileged and honored to have been able to achieve not only a school requirement for my Honors program, but also to have achieved a personal goal of being able to participate in a very visual and hands-on opportunity and finish my experience knowing that I met all the challenges and goals with success.

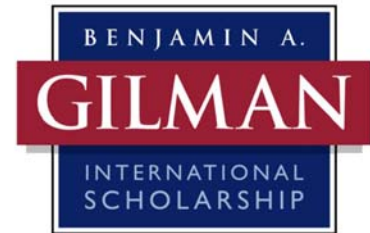
For my Follow-on-Service Project, I chose to work with my home

institution's study abroad office to encourage other students with disabilities to also participate in study abroad opportunities. By sharing my experience with other students with disabilities, I am able to expand the study abroad office's outreach to students and to bring disabled and non-disabled students together to support one another to achieve the same goals. Through this approach, I was able to promote the Gilman

Scholarship, as it encourages students who may not have previously felt they were able to study abroad to apply and learn about this program. I will continue to use my platform in the study abroad office to connect with disabled students and share my experiences to hopefully encourage them to pursue a similar opportunity.

# MINDY DIEZ, HONG KONG, 2007

Centenary College of Louisiana  
Louisiana



I studied abroad at Lingnan University in Tuen Mun, Hong Kong, during the Spring of 2007. At the time the institution was billed as the only public, liberal arts university in Hong Kong and the surrounding areas.

Studying at Lingnan set me on the path to become an international educator. I am currently a freelance teacher for EF Education First, the world's largest private education company, as well as Enriched Schools New Orleans. I have also written curriculum for Volunteers Colombia and the Colombian Ministry of Education, taught at a teacher training institute in Barranquilla with World Teach, worked in gifted education in Costa Rica, taught and managed

the first Youth Works Summer Program for students with disabilities in New Orleans in conjunction with the Mayor's Office, The Louisiana Green Corps, and the ARC, as well as been a special education teacher with Alice Harte Charter School and the Algiers Charter School Association. I am finishing my Master of Arts in Teaching at the University of New Orleans, studying both special education and secondary social studies.

My dream is to one day open a system of charter schools that are multi-lingual, and blend eastern and western culture and educational methods. Hong Kong provided me with an east meets west perspective that I have carried through into all my endeavors.

Studying in Hong Kong also provided me with life long friends. I still talk to them to this day and we meet up from time to time at different destinations around the world. I will never forget the time I spent living with a Chinese family and placing third in an

International Dragon Boat Race in Macau.

Before moving to Hong Kong, I had never left the country. I have now been to over twenty countries for professional and personal reasons. I never would have thought this was possible if I had not been able to study abroad with the Gilman Scholarship.

***"Studying at Lingnan set me on the path to become an international educator."***

Studying abroad made me the person I am today. I am forever grateful for the opportunities it afforded me. I believe my experiences in Hong Kong were the most important part of my time as an undergraduate.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

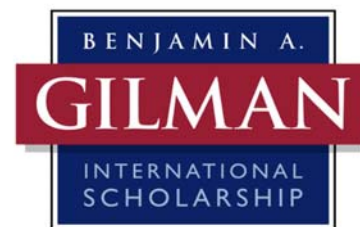
During my time abroad, I was a featured blogger on the website of my home university. I regularly discussed the Gilman Scholarship in my blog and in featured articles. I also combined my service project with my work as a Peer

Study Abroad Advisor. I worked at the Intercultural Affairs Office at Centenary College of Louisiana. I organized workshops and a webpage in order to educate fellow students on their options for study abroad, as well as the

funding that was available such as the Gilman. Upon my return to the U.S. I was able to regularly share my experiences living abroad and connect people with the resources of the Institute of International Education.

# JELICIA DIGGS, MOROCCO, 2015

Howard University  
North Carolina



I always knew that the desire to step outside of my comfort zone would take me amazing places, but I never once thought it would take me halfway across the world for five months during my undergraduate career. However, looking back, I can say that the timing of my study abroad journey to Morocco was nothing short of perfect, and I have the Gilman Scholarship to thank for that. The opportunity to study, live, and adapt in another country is one unmatched by any other. In addition to a slew of transferrable academic, personal, and career skills, I gained a network of amazing Gilman scholars, American and Moroccan students, and so much more!

I spent my spring academic semester studying abroad in Rabat, Morocco. My studies were concentrated on the Arabic language and I researched the

development of U.S. – MENA region relations and Morocco's growing migrant population. I had spent time studying Arabic at my home university, but I knew that I would be able to strengthen my skills when in a native-speaking country. My Moroccan professors helped me push towards the academic and personal goals I set for the semester, but I was even more grateful that the learning experience did not stop after classes ended.

***“My Moroccan professors helped me push towards the academic and personal goals I set for the semester, but I was even more grateful that the learning experience did not stop after classes ended.”***

In Morocco, I lived with an amazing host family, which eased my transition into such a distinct place. Every evening I would come home and speak with my host family about my day, my host siblings would share their experiences, and I would help them with their English homework in return for their assistance with my Arabic homework. In only a few

weeks, my host family began to feel just like “family” and Morocco more like “home.” They were also very instrumental to many of the connections I made to complete interviews for my research project.

I chose to focus heavily on the topic of immigration because I felt a connection with many of the migrants in Morocco. It began with me starting a conversation with two women I passed on my walk to school everyday. I listened to their stories of journeying to Morocco and the difficulties they faced building a new life in a country where they did not know the language or culture. With my research, I told their stories and proposed reasonable solutions to Morocco's influx of migrants. Forming connections with people from all over the world is truly an amazing feeling because of the wisdom, stories, and unique perspectives we all have to offer one other.

I am truly thankful that the Gilman Scholarship helped to alleviate the financial strain of my study abroad expenses, as well as open up my eyes to a diverse array of international affairs careers such as the U.S. Foreign Service.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

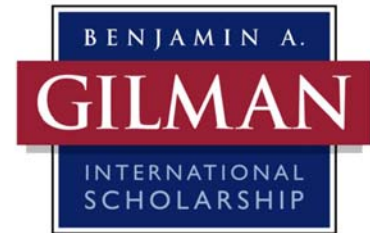
I had the awesome opportunity to complete my Follow-on Service Project while in Morocco through the Gilman Scholarship's partnership with Reach the World. With this project, I created a minimum of two blog posts each week for classes of third-grade students in New York. The posts included an inside look

into my study abroad experience through stories, pictures, and videos. I found the blog to be a great way for me to reflect upon my study abroad experience, and gave me the chance to bring an amazing group of students along with me on my journey.

Since returning to the U.S., I have also hosted a forum at my home university to inform others about the Gilman Scholarship. As a first-generation college student and the first individual in my family to study abroad, I want to ensure that others benefit from similar life-changing study abroad experiences that I had.

## DALAYNA GARDNER, INDIA, 2015

University of California, Riverside  
California



I certainly beat the odds when it comes to students who study abroad. My identity consists of an African American, first generation college student who has epilepsy as well. But, with faith all things are possible and despite the odds, the Gilman Scholarship allowed me to pursue a dream I never thought would be possible and be the first in my family to leave the United States of America.

In the summer of 2015, I participated in a research program in India in a small city called Pune for 8 weeks. This gave me the opportunity to study the education curriculum, educational traditions, and teaching strategies for children in India in comparison to American

education. Specifically, I worked with deaf children and assessed if a child's gender has any impact on the education they receive. Doing research in a developing country allowed me to work with children from different walks of life and laid the foundation for my future career. As an Anthropology major, this opened my eyes and gave me a different perspective on what an education is as well as how it is perceived around the world.

Traveling to India, I learned that my disability could only hinder me if I allowed it to. My "disability" did not take away my ability to do anything I put my mind to.

I explored the world like never before and traveled to other cities in India such as Mumbai, Jaipur, and Durshet, where I saw the diversity of India composed of diverse creeds, customs, and vibrant colors with endless varieties of food, traditions, and languages. Not only did I learn about their culture, but I became more in touch with my own, finding cultural artifacts and discovering black history that

managed to travel across the world from America to India.

***"Traveling to India, I learned that my disability could only hinder me if I allowed it to. My "disability" did not take away my ability to do anything I put my mind to."***

Given the privilege of visiting the second-largest growing economy in the world, I have developed an enhanced understanding of global issues in the education system. My experience in India has inspired me to continue working with underprivileged children. It has helped me see the value of education, the impact teachers make every day, and how significant education is to the future of our nation.

### FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

My Follow-on Service Project consists of me bringing awareness to disabled students that studying abroad is possible and there are resources that can accommodate their needs. My goal is to truly diversify the UC Education

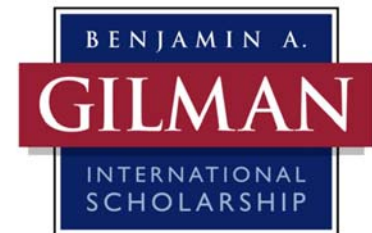
Abroad Program (EAP) using outreach and recruitment as the main keys to my Follow-on Service Project. Some of my strategies include creating a web page for potential disabled students interested in studying

abroad to access, creating a brochure, advertising at various study abroad fairs, hosting workshops, and giving presentations that can potentially increase the amount of disabled students applying to study abroad.



# NATHAN GWIRA, CHINA, 2011

Rutgers University  
New Jersey



I see life as a jigsaw puzzle. A beautiful mosaic created by putting together life experiences. Studying abroad in China through the Gilman Scholarship added yet another piece to my puzzle.

Learning Mandarin Chinese and Chinese culture abroad was only a dream without the Gilman Scholarship. My semester abroad in Changchun, China was a life-changing experience for me not only because it enriched my worldview, but also because it was a two-way cultural exchange experience. During my study abroad experience, I was exposed to students from all over the world. My curiosity led to conversations with Chinese students over lunch and making

friends with Korean students after calligraphy lessons, to learning how to make Okonomiyaki in our shared dorm kitchen with the Japanese exchange students. During these experiences, I was also able to share stories about American culture and teach my Russian classmates how to play American football. The defining lesson within this experience was that people are just people. Contrary to the popular belief that cultures shift people from different regions apart, our unique cultures actually brought us together.

These multi-ethnic experiences have helped me to analyze situations more objectively by integrating varied perspectives into my way of thinking. I realized how much study abroad deepened my universal perspective when I returned to the United States from China. I became an extremely active leader on my campus and represented various multicultural organizations. After my experience in China, I was inspired to forgo the traditional route of applying to entry-level job positions, and instead pursued my passion of connecting with other cultures by

becoming an English teacher in Jinan, China for eighteen months after graduating from Rutgers University. My study abroad experience also

***“Contrary to the popular belief that cultures shift people from different regions apart, our unique cultures actually brought us together.”***

helped me find several other interlocking pieces of my life puzzle. The Gilman Scholarship opened up opportunities that led me back to the U.S. Department of State, first as an intern and now as an employee with the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. I look forward to becoming a future U.S. Ambassador to continue to utilize my language skills and my multicultural approach to help promote mutual understanding between the U.S. and other countries on a much larger scale.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

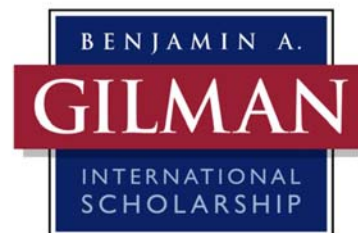
During my study abroad experience in China, I used my video production skills to create a short film. When I returned to my home campus of Rutgers University, I was able to host an event to screen my video about China. Professors and popular multicultural student organizations on campus were very supportive by spreading the word

about my event and encouraging people to attend. There were also a few campus clubs that sponsored the event by providing food and snacks. After the 30 minute screening of my experiences in China, I answer questions from the audience about studying abroad. I was glad I was able to share about my experiences in China and

encourage many others to pursue study abroad. After hearing about my experience, five friends of mine decided to study abroad in China as well. This made my experience more fulfilling. I cannot thank the Gilman Scholarship and the Institute of International Education enough for such an experience.

## JOSEPH HACKMAN, CHINA, 2010

University of Rhode Island  
Rhode Island



**S**tudying abroad in China for a year gave me the fantastic opportunity to take Computer Engineering classes alongside Chinese students. I learned about the fundamental differences between Western and Eastern education systems, and what it feels like to move from one to another. Not only did this help me understand my classmates at the time, but long after returning home, I still draw upon this experience to understand what it feels like for my Chinese colleagues to be new to America.

I participated in an internship that was also profoundly enlightening, above and beyond the technical experience I gained. I had a vague

understanding of the concept of offshoring engineering work before my internship, but became intimately aware of this process within an international setting.

These experiences have defined my professional and academic careers. Upon graduating from University of Rhode Island (URI), I worked for Intel. Being part of a multinational corporation allowed me to flex my international muscles. Being able to fly alone to Beijing at a moment's notice to solve business and technical problems for Intel partners isn't something I would be able to do as confidently without my Gilman experience. Furthermore, as a technical leader, my experiences have helped me understand and lead my colleagues, who are drawn from all corners of the earth.

Academically immersing myself in the Chinese language ignited a passion for linguistics and using computers to solve language problems. I am currently a student at the Center for Spoken Language Understanding at Oregon Health and Science University's School of

Medicine, and finishing my Master's degree with a year as a visiting student at Columbia University in New York City.

***"As a technical leader, my experiences have helped me understand and lead my colleagues, who are drawn from all corners of the earth."***

The world is a competitive place, and too many students overlook study abroad, especially in technical fields where it can be a strong differentiation factor. There are not terms strong enough to express how valuable this experience can be for a student, or how grateful I am to the Gilman Program for making it possible for me.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

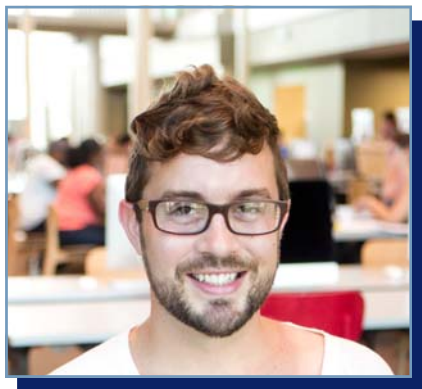
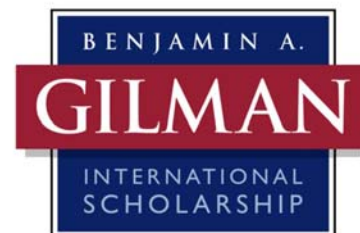
For my Follow-on Service Project, I spoke to high school seniors to share some of the benefits I've received from my experience abroad. This included a lot of information about the resources available to study abroad, how

studying abroad can be useful across academic disciplines, and information about the International Engineering Program at URI that helped me prepare for my time abroad.

Now, helping students study abroad has become a passion in and of itself for me. As a Gilman Alumni Ambassador, I hope to continue helping students make their study abroad dreams come true.

# WILLIAM HAYNES, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, 2012

St. Edwards University  
Texas



**A**s a Global Studies major, I wanted an opportunity to spend time in the Middle East to gain a better understanding of the issues the region faces firsthand. The Gilman Scholarship provided me with an opportunity to spend the 2012-2013 academic year at the American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates studying the language, culture, and history of the region.

Emirati citizens make up only 19% of the total population of the United Arab Emirates. This means that the majority of the people who live in the country are foreign workers or immigrants. Through the Gilman Scholarship, I had the

opportunity to travel to the seven different emirates, or states, gaining first hand experience with the various cultures, customs, and lifestyles found inside the country. My time in the United Arab Emirates helped me to appreciate the vast diversity found in such a small country, and I grew as an individual from my interactions with the people who live there.

One of the most unique aspects of my time abroad was the opportunity to participate in the Soliya Connect Program. The program, a United Nations initiative, brought college students together from the United States, Europe, Middle East, and South Asia for a group conference over an online platform similar to Skype. These students discussed sensitive topics in a neutral and safe space under the direction of a mediator. I have always believed that exposure to different cultures and lifestyles is the best way to promote harmony and understanding in the world. It was these conversations that led me to

become interested in how to effectively advance cross-cultural understanding in foreign policy to advance human security and mutual understanding between the East and West.

***"I have always believed that exposure to different cultures and lifestyles is the best way to promote harmony and understanding in the world."***

My experiences in the Middle East have led me to pursue a Master's degree in Security Studies at Georgetown University focusing on Human Security in the Muslim World. Eventually, I hope to use my international experiences and education to work for the U.S. State Department, ensuring humanitarian principles are thoroughly integrated into U.S. foreign and national policy.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

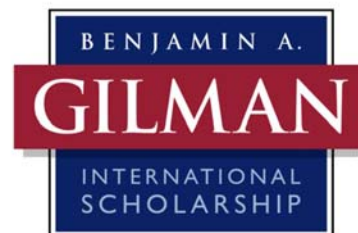
My Follow-on Service Project for the Gilman Scholarship was through their partnership with the educational nonprofit, Reach the World. While in the United Arab Emirates, I completed weekly blogs about my study

abroad experience. These blogs were shared with elementary school students in New York to enhance their studies and understanding of the world. Writing for the blog forced me to further explore the culture and

history of the United Arab Emirates, and enhance my passion for cross-cultural understanding and dialogue.

# CHARLOTTE HUMES, JORDAN, 2015

University of Rochester  
Kentucky



I built a snowman in Jordan. I could hardly believe it—a snowman in a country that’s 80% desert! Of course I did many more traditional Middle Eastern activities (drinking tea in an outdoor café and riding a camel through the desert, for starters), but I especially loved building the snowman because it was just so unexpected.

That was not the only surprise during my four months studying abroad in Jordan. I was consistently amazed by the hospitality of the Jordanians, especially my host family. I realized that my anxieties about communicating in Arabic

were entirely misplaced and I found out that everyone exaggerates how uncomfortable it is to ride a camel. It’s actually not that bad, once you get a rhythm going.

Such feelings of surprise signaled that my misconceptions—some of which I wasn’t even consciously aware of before—were being challenged. I traveled to Jordan full of expectations and stereotypes and worries, and came away with comfort in myself, and a deeper understanding of the culture. I left Jordan with a love for the country I never would have expected.

Even before my study abroad in Jordan, I knew that I wanted to work in the Arab World after graduation. Being there for a full semester allowed me to further refine that goal, as well as gain the cultural competency I will need to accomplish it.

I’m so grateful for my semester in Jordan. It allowed me to improve my proficiency in Arabic more than

I could have while studying in the US. I was able to meet so many amazing people, from taxi drivers, to my host family, to my professors, and I learned something from each of them. I am also grateful for the Gilman Scholarship for providing all of these opportunities. They simply would not have been possible otherwise.

*“I traveled to Jordan full of expectations and stereotypes and worries, and came away with comfort in myself, and a deeper understanding of the culture.”*

I was the first in my family to study abroad, but I hope I won’t be the last. As a Gilman Alumni Ambassador, I will encourage my younger cousins, as well as everyone else I meet, to apply for the Gilman Scholarship.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

For my Follow-on Service Project, I corresponded with a high school World History class in Kentucky, my home state, while I was in Jordan. To further develop the students’ World War II curriculum, I collected testimonies from Jordanians that explained the

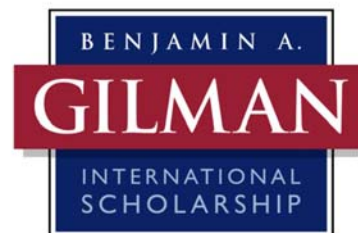
impact Winston Churchill, the Ottoman Empire, and the war on the Arab World had on their lives. I think this gave the students a more well-rounded understanding of the subject matter.

Additionally, I wrote blog entries for the Gilman Global Experience blog while in Jordan. This platform allowed me to share my experience with others throughout the semester, all the while encouraging them to seek out their own experiences abroad.



# ISLAM IBRAHIM, ITALY, 2015

University of South Florida  
Florida



**T**he closest I thought I would ever be to Italy was the three years of Italian I completed in high school. A few years later, I found myself endlessly gazing at Michelangelo's original statue of the David in the Accademia Gallery in Florence, Italy. This remarkable opportunity was made possible by the Gilman Scholarship, for it was the reason I had the necessary funds in order to study abroad.

The program I chose to participate in is called USF Science in Florence. Italy was the birthplace of one of the most notable times in history, the Renaissance, where the bridge between the Middle Ages and Modern history was made. Many famous scientists partook in contributing their ideologies,

theories, and inventions during this pivotal time such as Leonardo Da Vinci, Galileo Galilei, and Johannes Kepler. As a science major, I saw this opportunity of taking two upper level rigorous courses (Biochemistry, Historical Perspectives in Chemistry) in a condensed summer session to further prepare myself for a Physician Assistant graduate program.

Biochemistry is one of the most difficult courses I had to take during my undergraduate career and taking it in an unfamiliar country made it an arduous task. In addition, attempting to do well in this course while simultaneously enduring an intensive writing class proved to be a laborious endeavor, however I achieved my goals and concluded both classes with A's.

Adapting to a new environment with strenuous tasks to complete in a short amount of time enhanced my time management skills. Moreover, this rare opportunity gave me the chance to develop my interpersonal skills; I effectively organized and executed study groups among my biochemistry

classmates that assisted our academic challenges. The amalgam of residing in a new country and communicating despite language barriers exceedingly improved my language proficiency skills while functioning with a high level of ambiguity.

All in all, I developed a deep cultural awareness and love for another country and the classmates I lived with during my time abroad. I enlarged my horizons and gained profound knowledge from a new culture that made me realize how broad our species' diversity truly is. I will forever be thankful to the Gilman Scholarship and the U.S. Department of State for the astounding opportunities they bestow for students like myself. *La vita e bella!*

***"Adapting to a new environment with strenuous tasks to complete in a short amount of time enhanced my time management skills."***

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

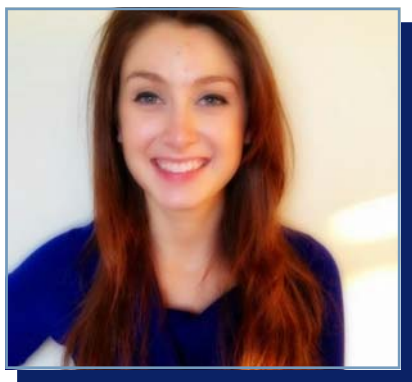
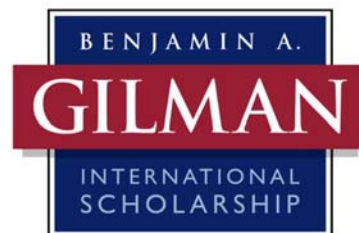
The purpose of my Follow-on Service Project was to convey a message to individuals that grew up with limited resources such as myself. I wanted to clear any ambiguity and stereotypes associated with studying abroad such as "it is only for the privileged" and concurrently

promote the Gilman Scholarship. To relay the message, I decided to display my project at the University of South Florida's Bull Market, which is an outdoor exhibition for local student organizations or businesses to promote their products and services. I constructed a poster portraying the

snap shots of my adventures throughout Italy to attract students to my station. I then emphasized major points of the Gilman Scholarship and showed the immense opportunities it may provide for selected recipients.

## GRACE KERSCHENSTEINER, SINGAPORE, 2014

Drexel University  
Pennsylvania



**A**s a Gilman scholar, I was afforded the opportunity to study abroad in Singapore for five months at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

My experience abroad has helped me grow as a person, a student, and a member of my community. At NTU, I took a Mandarin Chinese class. While I enjoyed foreign language courses in my early education, my interest tapered in college as I devoted more serious concentration to my Economics major. While taking the Chinese course, I was reminded again why I enjoyed foreign language studies—it was fun, interactive, and it opened up a whole new way of communication and understanding others.

Every day studying abroad in Singapore was an adventure, from trying different cuisines at every meal, to exploring new neighborhoods. I spent time in towns with unique infrastructure and transportation, and I was able to take part in new activities.

***“I have been able to utilize the Chinese I learned and my experience in Singapore to create meaningful exchanges and connections back home in the United States.”***

Additionally, through the Gilman Scholarship, I was connected with the U.S. Embassy in Singapore and had the opportunity to attend two networking events during which I met with other U.S. scholars in Singapore. I am grateful for the opportunity to have attended these events, as they really stand out as some of the highlights of my time in Singapore.

The impact of my study abroad experience has broadened my academic goals, as I now take a more global view of economics, and have more thoroughly pursued my curiosity for foreign languages. Upon returning to my home university from Singapore, I chose to mentor international students from Asia through the Community Bridge Program at my university and have been able to utilize the Chinese I learned and my experience in Singapore to create meaningful exchanges and connections back home in the United States. I also enrolled in my university's Global Engagement Scholar program where I am involved in international coursework and co-curricular activities. I hope to build upon my study abroad experience by conducting research in Indonesia next year with the help of other US State Department funded opportunities.

### FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

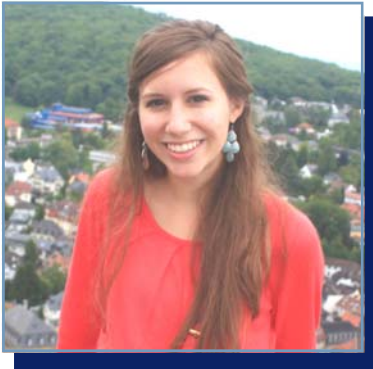
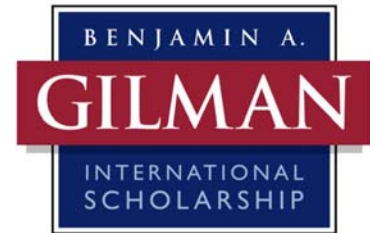
For my Follow-on Service Project, I served as a liaison between the Office of International Programs (OIP) at my university and students interested in studying and interning abroad. An article about my study abroad

experience in Singapore was published at my university and I also created a video to be posted as a feature on the OIP website. In addition, I assisted OIP as a mentor for incoming exchange students from Singapore. My hope

is that this work will inspire others to pursue study abroad opportunities in the future.

## ELIZABETH LOHRENZ, RUSSIA, 2012

Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Minnesota



**D**uring the summer of 2012, I participated in a faculty led study abroad program through my university to Russia. The month-long program included travel between three Russian cities: Saint Petersburg, Magadan, and Moscow. The program also included an opportunity to participate in academic research alongside the faculty leader of the program.

Study abroad offered a unique context for me to gain understanding of Russian history and culture. Through my interactions with community members from various levels of society, I gained further insight into the reality of everyday Russian culture. I observed through my interactions that the region continues to face economic challenges, a prevalence of

alcoholism, and higher rates early mortality; though efforts to lessen these challenges are being made by government sponsored youth and social programs.

***"My time abroad enhanced my cross-cultural communication and cultivated personal skills such as adaptability, flexibility, and resourcefulness, which are essential in any cross-cultural environment."***

For the academic research component of my study abroad, I surveyed students at North Eastern State University of Magadan to measure levels of cultural competency for later comparison to cultural competency levels of U.S. students from our home university. During our time in Moscow, our program had the honor of presenting our findings at the Global Studies Conference at Moscow State University.

My study abroad program to Russia ultimately helped affirm and direct

my academic and professional pursuits, and contributed to my own personal growth as well. Russia provided a context for me to study my undergraduate coursework beyond the classroom experience. My time abroad enhanced my cross-cultural communication and cultivated personal skills such as adaptability, flexibility, and resourcefulness, which are essential in any cross-cultural environment.

I am grateful for the opportunity provided by the Gilman Scholarship Program to pursue my study abroad goals. The scholarship helped me achieve my goals and in doing so gave me much more. My study abroad program to Russia developed my desire to study and learn more about world by experiencing it first-hand. As a Gilman Alumni Ambassador, my goal is to promote the significance and impact that study abroad can have in a person's life to university students and make them aware of the opportunities they have to achieve their own study abroad goals through programs such as the Gilman Scholarship.

### FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

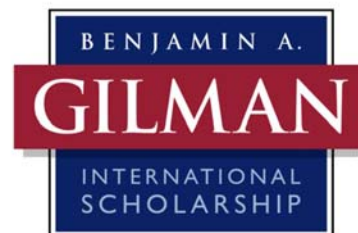
For my Follow-on Service Project, I applied and received a position as an Education Abroad Outreach Intern with the study abroad office at my university. This was an excellent way to directly reach current university students through classroom presentations

highlighting my study abroad experience, the opportunities available to students through the study abroad office, and the Gilman Scholarship. I was able to make several classroom visits throughout the semester and also participated in the university's study abroad fair.

All in all, my Follow-on Service Project gave me an avenue to promote study abroad and the Gilman Scholarship while also helping me gain professional experience.

# ZECHARIAH MEUNIER, MADAGASCAR, 2013

Lawrence University  
Wisconsin



**S**tudying abroad in Madagascar was a truly transformative experience that helped me to grow academically, professionally, and personally. As a Biology and Environmental Studies major, I am passionate about understanding and conserving the natural world. In particular, I am fascinated by the diversity and complexity of ecosystems. Tropical rainforests are the greatest strongholds of biodiversity on the planet, and one of the most biodiverse places is the island of Madagascar. Thus, studying abroad in Madagascar was the perfect opportunity for me to observe numerous plants and animals in their habitats, which was

much more enriching than simply reading about them in a textbook.

In addition, my program allowed me to complete a three week independent research project. For my project, I collaborated with Malagasy scientists from Ranomafana National Park and helped them to analyze climate data and tree growth records. My studies in Madagascar reaffirmed my academic and professional goals of becoming an ecologist and conducting field research abroad.

Moreover, I fulfilled many of my personal goals by studying abroad. For the first time in my life, I traveled outside of North America and experienced a culture other than my own. Through home stays and village visits, we interacted with Malagasy hailing from several different tribes, and it was intriguing to see the differences and similarities among them. In addition, I witnessed firsthand the struggles of life in a developing country, a perspective that I believe all citizens of wealthier nations ought to have.

These amazing and rewarding experiences whet my appetite for academic travel. My long term professional goal is to establish an international research program and contribute toward sustainable development, which I believe is a product of caring for both ecosystem and human health. To that end, I am currently working at a healthcare software company to learn about the medical industry.

Studying abroad in Madagascar would not have been possible without the aid of the Gilman Scholarship. As an Alumni Ambassador, I am looking forward to giving back to the program that has given so much to me, and I am excited to help other students fulfill their study abroad dreams.

***"My studies in Madagascar reaffirmed my academic and professional goals of becoming an ecologist and conducting field research abroad."***

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

After returning from Madagascar, I gave a series of presentations both on campus and in my community to provide environmental education. As co-president of Lawrence University's Bird and Nature

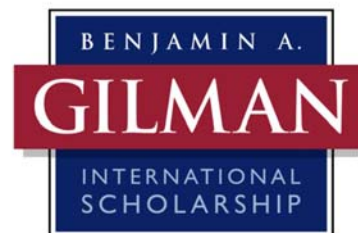
Club, I taught my fellow birders about the avifauna of Madagascar. I also gave a presentation about the environmental challenges of Madagascar to students and faculty at Lawrence as well as employees in the Wisconsin

Department of Administration. At our Biology Department's annual poster symposium, I discussed my research project. Finally, I ran an information session for young science majors about conducting research while studying abroad.



## ALEX MONTOYA, CHINA, 2014

West Texas A&M University  
California



I needed something more than just an above average college experience; I needed something that would keep me operating on a higher level. International students and a best friend from Kazakhstan created my college family that pushed me beyond my boundaries of comfort and transformed me into a young pioneer inspired to change the globe. Everyday as they study abroad and live the American dream, I knew that their drive to experience more diversity gave me the inspiration and vision to continue as a world traveler and an active student of all cultures.

Having studied abroad before in Italy, I applied for the Gilman to take on

the challenge of participating in the global workforce. I wanted to go somewhere else and bring back a perspective held by very few. As a recipient, I discovered that I landed in network of phenomenal individuals and I will never return to my once ordinary life. The experiences afforded to me have transformed me; I am now a Gilman scholar.

Being an intern for Ringier Media Company in Shanghai, China was instrumental in my transformation. In the heart of Shanghai, I learned the real meaning of passion. I found the hard-earned clarity necessary to continue on my path to success. This company showed me the ropes of working the back-end of websites, writing for a magazine publication, and how to be successful within the media industry.

As I explored China, I met equally driven individuals whose passion for traveling was deeply rooted in their minds. Finding friends to travel across the country with gave me forced opportunities to try new things that I would never do otherwise. Impactful

conversations and meaningful friendships gave me direction in many points of my life.

I am now working as the media consultant for the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership at West Texas A&M University. I am also pursuing a Masters of Business Administration that will lead me into a doctoral program in the near future (abroad, of course) in International Studies. While I earn my next two degrees, I have been working with my degree track to land further study abroad opportunities.

***"I found the hard-earned clarity necessary to continue on my path to success."***

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

During the course of my study abroad program I was given the opportunity to be a Gilman Global Experience Correspondent. As my internship progressed over the summer and my adventure slowly unfolded, a mixture of writings and video blogs were recorded and published to be seen by students globally in an effort to showcase what a study abroad experience looks like first hand. After returning to Texas, I reached out and

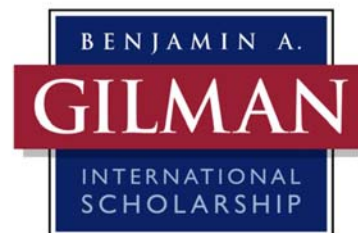
continued to publish my content on several websites and publications to further the awareness of the Gilman Scholarship. I also participated and encouraged students in study abroad fairs, classroom discussions, new student orientations, and "Lunch and Learns" on campus.

A few months after I returned from China, the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs selected me to represent the

Gilman Scholarship at the inaugural White House Blogger Summit in Washington D.C. This summit brought together the top 100 most influential travel bloggers, digital media outlets, and the Obama Administration to successfully develop innovative ways to communicate experiences to Millennial and young leaders to ultimately mobilize students in educational, cultural, and professional exchanges.

# YVES MAI ORSINO, MOROCCO, 2013

University of Memphis  
Tennessee



My semester abroad in Morocco contributed tremendously to my academic studies as well as my personal development as an international citizen. Not only was I given the opportunity to understand first hand my honors thesis topic about the legacy of French colonialism in North Africa, but I was also given the chance to re-discover my history in a culture completely different from the one I grew up in and left behind.

Living and studying in Ifrane, a college town nestled high up in the Middle Atlas Mountains, I observed and absorbed a side of Morocco and Africa that many people do not expect. My travels took me up and down the Moroccan coastline as well as into the interior of the country. I saw the sun rise and set over the Sahara, breathed in the salty Atlantic

air as local fishermen prepared the morning's catch, and got lost in the maze of the old city's marketplace.

Academically, I took advantage of the resources and facilities offered at my school, including Arabic classes. I always had an affinity for Arabic given the fact that I study Middle Eastern and North African politics and history. In my classes, I was able to apply real world politics. For example, my 'Women in Politics and Society' class took a field trip to a women's weaving cooperative in Zawiya Ifrane in order to evaluate the impact of King Mohammed's National Human Development Initiative.

I had the opportunity to practice my Arabic skills with the local children. Through interviews with the women, I saw how the cooperative is a tremendous asset to the villagers since the space also doubles as a community center for the younger children; yet the isolation of the village—off a cliff—makes it difficult to sell and distribute finished products. As the women made lunch for us, I observed a loophole in the King's development program: enhanced economic conditions did not improve the status of rural

women in terms of gender equality. One woman said it actually made it worse because the men know government funding will continue to flow into the village as long as the women remain disadvantaged.

On a personal level, I stumbled upon an Asian restaurant in Rabat owned by a Vietnamese family! Who would have thought that I came all the way to Morocco to practice my broken Vietnamese? During my conversation with the owner, she taught me the correct pronunciation of 'fish' in Vietnamese, asked me about my family, and told me how she ended up in Morocco. It was a fascinating end to my semester! The world is truly a small place and in one-way or another, we are all connected.

*"I was also given the chance to re-discover my history in a culture completely different from the one I grew up in and left behind."*

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

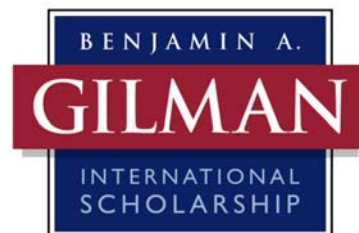
For my project, I wrote a personal letter in the form of a newsletter, addressing staff and volunteers of Multi-National Ministries (MNM) in Memphis. In the letter, I discussed the joys and challenges of studying abroad and its impact on my life. The underlining purpose of my

letter was to challenge the volunteers to seek more cross-cultural experiences. Moreover, I also hope to show college-bound MNM students that study abroad is accessible and international education is beneficial for everyone, even low-income immigrant families.

Once the newsletter was published, I presented a copy to my study abroad office and an excerpt of my letter landed on the front page of the Spring 2014 edition of the University of Memphis Study Abroad Newsletter.

## BADOI PHAN, SINGAPORE, 2013

Johns Hopkins University  
California



I completed a summer research internship at the National University of Singapore as part of a foreign-exchange program with my home university. My goal was to gain research experience in Biomedical Engineering, and pursue it further in the following three years of my undergraduate career. The experience allowed me to work with engineers, professors, and clinicians on a project to develop wearable sensors and aid rehabilitation of post-stroke patients. The research internship was different from traditional classes, meaning I was

my own organizer. I learned to manage my time, set goals for myself, and carry out plans to reach those goals. Not only did I get involved in this exciting work, I got a flavor of the professional and real-world impact of my major.

Singapore's key aspect is its proximity to other Southeast Asian countries, making it a hub for culture and trade. I found the best part of Singapore's culture to be the food and the people. Most people I met in Singapore deeply valued higher education for the upcoming generations, and helpfully showed me the best local cuisine within the same conversations.

Studying abroad in Singapore granted a better understanding of my academic field, allowed me to get my bearings on the research track of Biomedical Engineering, and has since molded the direction of my academic pursuits. In fact, Singapore has been such an impact

that I studied abroad again to complete a research project in Molecular Biology in Oxford, United Kingdom. The readiness and skills I gained from the Singapore program greatly enhanced my experience in Europe.

***"Not only did I get involved in this exciting work, I got a flavor of the professional and real-world impact of my major."***

Study abroad has been made a monumental impact on my life, and I am thrilled to be a Gilman Alumni Ambassador to advocate the Gilman Scholarship as an opportunity for other students.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

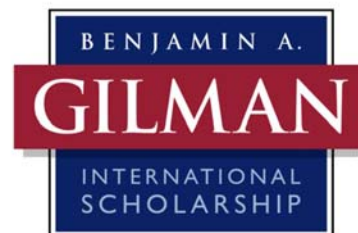
For my Follow-on Service Project, I returned to school at Johns Hopkins and presented to the incoming freshman class of Biomedical Engineering students. I chose to speak to this demographic because I remember being overwhelmed by the prospect of studying abroad in

addition to the demanding engineering curriculum when I was a freshman. I was inspired by upperclassmen to pursue my own study abroad experience in Singapore, and wanted to do the same for the first-year students. I shared the highlights of my experience in Singapore, and

encouraged them to think about study abroad and begin searching for programs and scholarships like Gilman. I did it, and so can they. I have since seen many of them go off on their own study abroad experiences.

## SARA RASENACK, GERMANY, 2002-2003

Oklahoma State University  
Oklahoma



**T**hirteen years ago, I departed the airport in Oklahoma City to launch my two-semester cultural immersion at the Otto-Friedrich Universität in Bamberg, Germany. My goal was to improve my command of the German language through a collegiate study abroad program, coordinated with my alma mater, Oklahoma State University.

Little did I know at that time where this road would take me. Before getting on that plane, I thought that my linguistic proficiency would improve merely by taking courses taught entirely in German. To a certain extent, this is true. However, I found it's really the basic, everyday tasks and events that truly educate you

when it comes to foreign language. A young mother speaking to her toddler on the bus can enlighten you on how to properly pronounce a particular phrase, for example, and everything starts making sense in an entirely new way. The same can be said for going grocery shopping, watching television, or even cooking in the dorm kitchen.

The Gilman Scholarship made it financially possible for me to make these kinds of real-world experiences that are simply unavailable in any classroom or textbook. Without my year abroad, I'm quite certain that my life would have taken a completely different course.

My accent-free, fluent German skills have opened many doors for me. Earning a B.A. in German does not provide you with insight into the German residential housing market or robotic packaging systems. However, it was in both of these industries that I have made my living since college. My first professional experience was in Düsseldorf as a translator

in the communications department. I converted German press releases, reports, and internal correspondence to English. For the past eight years, I have been working as a cultural bridge between American customers who use custom packaging equipment made in Germany as a spare parts coordinator. The common denominator for both positions was German, of course. I am truly thankful to the Gilman Scholarship for providing this

***"The Gilman Scholarship made it financially possible for me to make these kinds of real-world experiences that are simply unavailable in any classroom or textbook."***

student from small-town Oklahoma with the opportunity to have such a rewarding career and future thanks to this very marketable skill.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

Upon completion of my program and returning home, I found multiple opportunities to encourage other students to apply to the Gilman Scholarship. For example, I took part in several Q&A sessions coordinated with

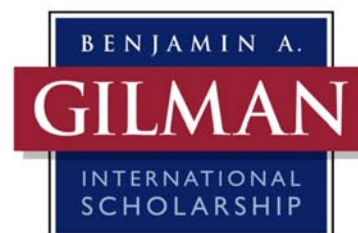
my campus study abroad office where I was able to answer students' questions and generally get them excited about the prospect of studying in a foreign country. I also gave a presentation on the application process for the

Gilman and highlighted the impact the scholarship had on me during my time abroad. In giving back by recruiting and informing others, I started to become part of the global, study abroad community, which continues to be rewarding.



# AARON RECORDS, CHINA, 2013

Colby-Sawyer College  
Maine



**B**efore I studied abroad, I was just a Creative Writing major at a small liberal arts college in New Hampshire. Afterwards, I became a double major in Philosophy and increasingly active on my home campus. My growth was inspired by my several tours of Confucian temples throughout China — from Beijing to Nanjing — and the many times I had to rely on my rudimentary understanding of Mandarin to get around.

Study abroad fulfilled my personal desire to venture into a starkly foreign environment. China, and Beijing in particular, showed me just how well I can handle life in a different country and in a megacity. Academically, I

understand China and its global importance far better now than before, and my interest in this subject encouraged me to complete the double major I always wanted. Professionally, study abroad aided my decision to pursue a path to practicing International Law with a focus on U.S.-China relations. I saw firsthand how modern China has become and all the issues caused by their rapid industrialization.

***“This experience has encouraged me to set a long-term goal of working in the Department of State or United Nations after law school.”***

One day I’d like to work with China, on behalf of America, to reach mutual agreements to better not just our countries but the entire planet — issues like human rights, global warming, the plight of poverty, and lack of education around the world. China and

America will be key in solving these problems, and study abroad helped me realize that I want to be a part of that.

An especially profound aspect of my study abroad experience was volunteering at the Beijing American Center, a program of the U.S. Embassy. I was able to encourage Chinese students to study in America while building connections with foreign service officers in Beijing. This experience has encouraged me to set a long-term goal of working in the Department of State or United Nations after law school. My time in China has left me insatiable in my desire to achieve these goals.

In addition to being a Gilman Alumni Ambassador, I am the Presidential Fellow in College Communications at my alma mater, Colby-Sawyer College. I also freelance for local papers on the side, and plan to apply to law schools to acquire a J.D.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

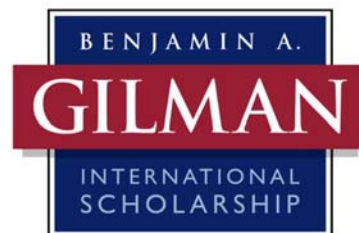
For my Follow-on Service Project, I wrote blog posts for the Gilman Global Experience blog while I was in China. I shared these posts with friends, family, and extended contacts so they could learn about both my experience in China, and how I was able to

study abroad through the Gilman Scholarship. My most popular post was about Chinese customs regarding preparing and sharing food, and the underlying implications of these customs on one’s reputation and prestige in the Chinese community. Writing

for the Gilman Global Experience blog allowed me to share my study abroad experience with a wide audience, and to enjoy my experiences in China even more through reflection and composing thoughtful writing for the readers.

## CATHERINE TABOR, AUSTRIA, 2015

Auburn University  
Alabama



I never thought that I would get the opportunity to live and study abroad until I heard about the Gilman Scholarship, which ended up making the impossible a possibility for me. As an English Literature and German double major, study abroad was something that was always heavily pushed on me by advisors and peer mentors. Studying abroad, it seemed, was the ticket to making myself marketable after graduation. As one of 10 children, however, study abroad did not seem like a realistic opportunity.

With the Gilman, I was able to study abroad in Vienna, Austria, for 5 weeks as part of an intensive

language immersion program that also allowed me to explore the Austrian culture I had always found fascinating. More than just the classroom instruction I received in Austria, I was able to practice my German in the city with real people. I was able to grow more confident in my language skills and I learned that even though I may make mistakes I can still communicate in German with German-speaking people.

There were a lot of really interesting and great things about my study abroad experience. However, the best part about my experience abroad was staying with my host mom. My host mom was really great and helped me a lot with my German language skills. She also showed me a lot of places in Vienna that I would not have been able to see or appreciate had I visited Vienna as a tourist. Living with her and practicing German with her for five weeks really allowed me to grow more comfortable having conversations in German.

My study abroad experience helped me a lot academically. I am a senior at Auburn now and I am currently enrolled in four German courses, and after my study abroad experience, I am able to go through the courses with confidence. I am also applying for the Fulbright and law school, hoping to one day be able to work for Mercedes-Benz U.S., International.

*"I was able to grow more confident in my language skills and I learned that even though I may make mistakes I can still communicate in German."*

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

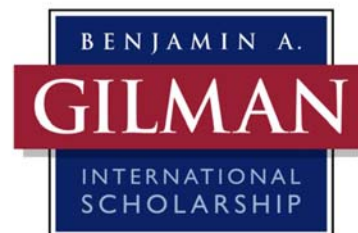
With my minor in Community and Civic Engagement, I decided to focus on outreach within the local community. The main element of my Follow-on Service Project allowed me to continue an essay project I had started Spring 2015 with local middle and

high school students. The school serves a rural, underprivileged, ethnic minority population, and it was my intention to use the Gilman Scholarship as a way to not only encourage the students to study abroad and look beyond the bounds of their hometown

but also to pursue a college education. Opportunities like the Gilman Scholarship are a way to show them that college is more than just another four years in a classroom.

## ANTHONY TREAS, ECUADOR, 2014

Oregon State University  
Oregon



**A**s a requirement for my undergraduate degree in Public Health with a concentration in Health Promotion and Health Behavior, I participated in a 10-week public health internship in the remote area of Archidona, Ecuador. The internship consisted of performing basic water testing, data collection and reporting, and developing and conducting health surveys in two Kichwa indigenous communities.

During my internship I worked in situations that required me to be resourceful and unconventional because resources were limited or were not available. As an example, the water testing kits that were ordered from the U.S. did not come with pipettes and containers

to collect the water like they should have. This created a problem for the water testing, which was a big part of the overall project. Since there was a pharmacy in town, I suggested we use syringes because of their size and because they were sterile.

Working in an international setting required me to be flexible and patient when any issues or problems arose. What would constitute immediate action in the U.S. might be taken less seriously and not a pressing issue in this part of the world. This can be stressful; however, in today's global economy, cultural awareness is becoming a valuable skill. Most importantly, I witnessed the challenges that public health professionals are facing in Ecuador and how these issues are the same problems many developing countries are struggling with today. This was bothersome, but reassuring to me because most of what I was experiencing and learning reinforced what I gained through my undergraduate education at Oregon State University.

My internship experience abroad has inspired me to further pursue efforts to support Latinos in the U.S. in the areas of health and education. My future endeavors will entail promoting higher education, health education, and entrepreneurship to Latino communities.

The Gilman Scholarship provided me an opportunity to gain international experience that would further enhance my undergraduate education and gain personal insight and experience in international health as I pursue a Master in Public Health (MPH) International Health track.

***"My internship experience abroad has inspired me to further pursue efforts to support Latinos in the United States in the areas of health and education."***

### FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

My follow-on service project consisted of two parts. The first part was creating a blog where I posted updates and special events during my internship. For the second part of my service project, I presented my experience and

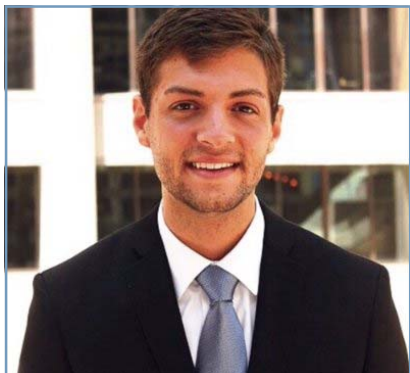
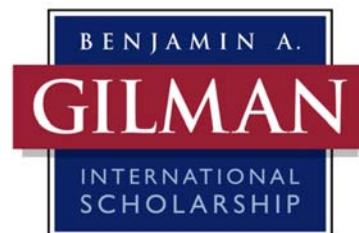
the Gilman Scholarship to Latino high school students.

The students were part of Oregon 4-H Outreach Leadership Institute program that promotes and encourages Latinos to finish high school and pursue higher

education. The presentation was conducted at Oregon State University where I am attending graduate school.

## BRYCE WIED, HUNGARY, 2014

DePaul University  
Illinois



**H**aving the opportunity to learn and live in another country was an experience that I dreamt of for nearly a decade, with the persistent belief that it was out of my reach. That was until I was discovered information about the Gilman Scholarship, which allowed me to be a part of a study abroad program in Budapest, Hungary. For three months, I was able to learn about foreign financial-market operations while also communicating and growing with other students from Hungary and

around the world.

Studying abroad has always been an important goal for me personally. People are at the core of my goals and ambitions and I have always been interested learning more about other cultures. As a Finance and Real Estate major, it was enlightening to work with other people with backgrounds much different than my own. In addition, I was given the opportunity to live in a residence hall filled with students from all over the world. The mix of cultures taught me about the world through peoples' cooking, customs, and religious practices. These experiences cannot fully be grasped in a classroom and this immersion into a foreign culture is where I learned the most. The knowledge I've gained from studying abroad has made me a more well-rounded, holistic

person.

***"These experiences cannot fully be grasped in a classroom and this immersion into a foreign culture is where I learned the most."***

Currently I am finishing my last year of college, and I am looking into continuing my education through a research or Master's program. As our economy becomes even more globally connected, my interest in helping students study abroad grows exponentially. As a Gilman Alumni Ambassador, I am excited to help more students achieve their next great accomplishment.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

With a strong aspiration to inform students of the opportunities to study abroad, my Follow-on Service Project included creating an ambassadorship for DePaul University. I served as the first student ambassador and focused on the freshman students in order to get them thinking about study abroad early in their college career. During the project, I

attended residence hall meetings, freshmen orientations, and campus organization meetings. Throughout the semester I met many students facing the same daunting prospect of affording study abroad that I faced my freshman year. Meeting with these students allowed for a tremendous learning experience, for both the students and myself. It was very encouraging to hear

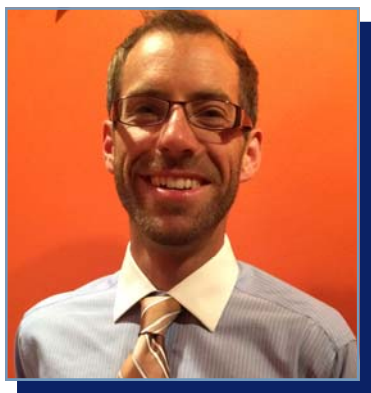
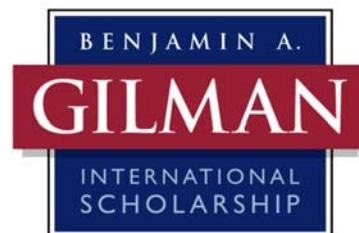
extremely positive feedback and genuine interest in studying abroad. Studying abroad would have been impossible for me without the Gilman Scholarship, and my goal is to continue helping other students gain access to the same opportunities the Gilman Scholarship provided me and so many others.



# CHADWICK WOHLTZ, PERU, 2015

Johnson County Community College

Kansas



**S**tudying abroad in Cusco, Peru in the summer of 2015 had a tremendous impact on my career and academic goals. This experience exposed me to a culture flourishing with growth and opportunity that has such a rich heritage. Being there and learning from the community has made me proud to be a global citizen.

I took courses in Spanish and International Business at Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola. I chose to live independently in an apartment for the summer. It was so exciting making my way to school on foot through the beautiful city named a world

heritage site by UNESCO. Getting to school was such an adventure. Being able to travel through Incan ruins every day on my way to learn Spanish really made me appreciate the culture.

Being in a different culture and learning abroad has encouraged me to expand my education. Studying abroad confirmed my academic goals and allowed me to be in the middle of a culture that possessed the necessary material for me to build on my degree in International Business.

***"Being there and learning from the community has made me proud to be a global citizen."***

While studying in Cusco, I chose to volunteer for a local hospital, Clínica San Juan de Dios. This experience allowed me to utilize the Spanish I was learning with a broad range of people. Being able

to volunteer there was such an amazing experience. I came to the country very uncomfortable speaking Spanish, so being relied upon to communicate with others made it easier to get out of my comfort zone.

I was able to visit numerous organizations with my business class on field trips while in Peru. We ventured to the Chamber of Commerce, the Department of Labor, and the National Reserve Bank. While at the Chamber of Commerce, I was asked to help translate for foreign investors at an export fair in Puerto Maldonado, located in the jungle. Quite an unexpected experience! Being abroad and seeing how the companies operate in another country has opened my eyes to possibilities of growing a small business. Learning from the Peruvian culture and seeing the economic ambitions they possess has encouraged me to seek further education in global economics.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

With my project, I aim to reach out to fellow non-traditional students seeking assistance to achieve their goals. Showing the success that I had studying abroad as a non-traditional student will ease the uncertainties others may have. My project will be emailed

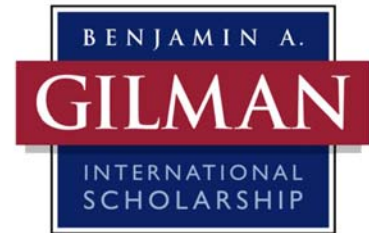
to Pell Grant recipients with information on studying abroad and the Gilman Scholarship. I am including a video of my time abroad with photographs and details of the benefits of studying abroad with the Gilman Scholarship and information for

students to contact their abroad counselors on campus. Being able to see the positive influence that my time abroad had on me as a non-traditional student will give others in my position the ability to see the benefits of studying abroad to reach their goals.

## BIANCA ZACHARY, INDIA, 2014

University of Missouri

Missouri



**D**uring the summer of 2014, I traveled to Bangalore, India to teach in a K-12 international school. I am an English Education major and I had always wanted to study abroad. This served as the perfect program for me to engage in my first international education adventure.

Though I stayed but six weeks in India, I had many remarkable experiences. My teaching internship was an unmatched experience. I woke up early every morning to begin my long commute to the school. The hours of teaching were long, but I felt nothing but adrenaline. It still remains the easiest thing I have had to get up for every morning. The students were incredibly diverse. On any given day I could be in a classroom with students of different ethnicities, who

spoke different languages, and practiced different religions. I was in India during Ramadan and being able to see a prominent time for Muslims in an area that has countless mosques was a unique experience for me. I think back to the moments at school when I conversed with the fasting Muslim students during lunch in the library when everyone else was eating.

*"On any given day I could be in a classroom with students of different ethnicities, who spoke different languages, and practiced different religions."*

I also had the chance to do some volunteer work. With my students, I visited a different school that was funded by the government and met young people who lived in severe poverty. There were no seats for the students in the government school, only hard concrete. It was dark so we kept the small classroom's door open. I also volunteered at a non-profit called U & I and met some of the most

inspiring boys and girls living in poverty with mental disorders. I remember dancing with a young man who had only one limb and it was here that I saw poverty like never before right in front of me. Small moments like these may seem meaningless to others, but my time in India with these wonderful students has been engrained in my soul.

I owe much to the Gilman Scholarship Program for providing me with a scholarship that allowed me to teach abroad in India. This opportunity transformed my career goals. I once thought I would teach at a high school in the United States, but while teaching in India, I realized that I want to be a part of the International Education field. I loved my time teaching at an international school and seeing students from many cultures and religions different from my own. Teaching abroad ignited a passion within me for International Education, and I look forward to representing and serving the Gilman Scholarship Program as an Alumni Ambassador this year.

## FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

My mission with my Follow-On Service Project was to showcase my time in India to students in the College of Education at my home university. While in India, I documented my experience through writing and pictures and when I got back to my university, I

attended events geared towards Education majors interested in teaching abroad. It is my hope that through my slideshows and presentations, others could see how meaningful and positive my experiences in India were. I hope that everyone who hears me speak

about my time teaching abroad is inspired to study abroad themselves.