

Elle Smith

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador
Switzerland (virtual), 2022



“I have disabilities, a single parent, am from a rural area, and have a low socioeconomic status, but I was able to have an international experience thanks to the Gilman Scholarship.”

Elle completed a virtual international internship based out of Switzerland as a Gilman Scholar in 2022. She would not have been able to do her study abroad program without Gilman. She is a woman with disabilities, a first-generation college student, and from a low socioeconomic status in rural Virginia. Elle’s Gilman Program experience enabled her to become better rounded in learning from a global perspective. It was important for Elle to also study Italian so that she could conduct interviews for her research. However, she has dyslexia and autism, making research and change difficult for her to understand. With the extensive research of both Italian and her research topic of "Women in Politics," it took ample time for her to truly create good work. She felt the need to work harder than most students.

Elle is currently an undergraduate at Virginia Tech (VT) studying philosophy, politics, economics, and political science.

- Pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Virginia Tech
- VT Women’s Rugby Player
- 2022 Governor’s Fellow, working for the Virginia Governor under the Secretary of Education

