Samantha Raghu

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador

Thailand, 2019

"Gilman provided me with the resources and confidence to prioritize creating pathways of opportunities abroad in my future endeavors."

Samantha studied abroad as a Gilman Scholar in fall 2019 at Chiang Mai University in Chiang Mai, Thailand. As a sociology major, her understanding of the field was strengthened as she witnessed how sectors of Thai society (e.g., demographics, beauty standards, politics) shaped her conversations and experiences with local Thai members. She also valued being able to understand Thai culture on a personal level. As a Guyanese woman, Samantha encountered many similarities to her own collectivist background in her interactions with Thai locals; this provided her with a sense of belonging while abroad.

While participating in weekend homestays in Northern Thailand, Samantha engaged with local Hmong and Karen families, where she learned about their culture and values, and the importance of preserving local heritage in the era of modernism. From these experiences, her interest in community engagement grew, and she pursued similar opportunities in her hometown in Minnesota following her return.

The intercultural communication skills Samantha gained abroad allow her to better interact with a wide array of individuals in her career. Her experience of adapting to different customs and cultural settings in Thailand strengthened her ability to adapt as she transitions into new and different work environments and roles.

- Earned a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Gustavus Adolphus College
- 2022 Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Semi-Finalist (Czech Republic)
- Cash management specialist with Premier Banks Minnesota

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