

# Hunter Wicklund

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador  
Ecuador, 2023



***“My Gilman Program experience reinforced my interest in the wider world and inspired me with the desire to work abroad to explore new places and cultures. Through the Gilman Program, I was able to explore my passion for marine science, and compare the Pacific Ocean, which I had never laid eyes on before, to my home along the Atlantic Ocean.”***

Hunter studied abroad as a Gilman scholar during the spring of 2023 through the University of Miami (UM) Marine Science UGalapagos Program in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. His time in Ecuador was field research-intensive, allowing him to explore a variety of ecological, geological, and community projects being implemented in the Islands. Through the program, Hunter learned a significant amount about scientific research conducted in the field and the challenges of conducting research abroad. He observed researchers working around challenges such as a lack of reliable equipment and an approach to science that was different from the push in the United States for “Citizen Science.” For the first time, he realized the approach used in the United States was not followed identically by other cultures.

Hunter credits his Gilman Program experience for a significant change in his perspective about how different cultures approach their way of life. He observed that many of the locals cared deeply for the environment on the island where Hunter was living and were making significant efforts to preserve and improve it. They had shifted their own livelihoods within one generation from extensive overfishing to a life of ecotourism. Hunter realized this had been a significant shift in their perspective and that it had happened almost overnight, which caused him to reflect on how he and others in the United States struggle to adapt to a changing world.

Hunter is a senior at UM, where he is majoring in marine biology and ecology and minoring in psychology. After graduation, he would like to attend dental school. He is confident that the soft skills he learned while abroad, such as efficient interviewing and working around language barriers, will assist him in the future as a dentist, whether he works to help communities abroad or domestically. Hunter is excited to be a Gilman Alumni Ambassador and expand the horizons of students falsely under the impression that studying abroad is an unattainable and unaffordable goal. He also hopes to alleviate students’ fears and encourage them to grow through study abroad experiences.

- Hometown: Berlin, Connecticut
- Pursuing a Bachelor of Science in marine biology and ecology and minoring in psychology at UM
- Lived with a host family during study abroad program

