

Mónica Pizano

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador
Spain, 2018



“My Gilman Program experience has been a defining journey that not only facilitated my personal and professional growth but also ignited a deep passion for promoting educational opportunities for underrepresented communities.”

Mónica studied abroad as a Gilman scholar during the spring of 2018 at the University of Málaga in Málaga, Spain. Her time in Spain allowed her to immerse herself in a different Spanish language and culture. As a person with a Mexican-American background, it was fascinating for Mónica to witness the nuances and variations of the language within Spain itself. This exposure expanded her linguistic horizons and enhanced her ability to communicate effectively with diverse groups of people. She gained a deeper understanding of the customs, traditions, and history of Spain, which enriched her linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Mónica credits her Gilman Program experience for not only igniting her desire to teach English abroad but also fueling her journey towards becoming an impactful educator and fostering cross-cultural exchange. She became Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) certified and moved to South Korea, where she taught English at a private school for a year. Her passion for teaching and engaging with communities grew stronger, but she wanted to teach in a location where she could communicate with the locals. This led her to apply for the Fulbright U.S. Student – English Teaching Assistant (ETA) program, and she was selected as a recipient for the Fulbright Program in Uruguay for the 2021-2022 cycle. As an ETA, Mónica created and taught English lessons for Spanish speakers at elementary, secondary, and teacher training centers in Uruguay and promoted U.S. cross cultural education.

Mónica now works as the lead family education specialist for the Migrant Education Program at James Madison University. In this role, she supports and advocates for the education of children from migrant families, ensuring they have access to equitable educational opportunities. Additionally, she connects families with valuable local resources to further enhance their educational experience and overall well-being. Mónica is excited to be a Gilman Alumni Ambassador and to provide support and guidance to others from similar backgrounds, helping them gain the confidence and self-worth to enter spaces where they may be underrepresented. She believes everyone deserves the opportunity to pursue their dreams and achieve their goals, regardless of their circumstances.

- Hometown: Jefferson, Georgia
- Earned a Bachelor of Arts in modern languages with focus on Spanish language and literature and a minor in English from the University of North Georgia (2019)
- Lead family education specialist for the Migrant Education Program at James Madison University
- Fulbright ETA in Uruguay, 2021-2022

