

Philip Okonkwo

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador
Italy, 2022



“The Gilman Program aided my communications skills and helped me realize I want to pursue a career that is internationally oriented and allows me to travel.”

Philip studied abroad as a Gilman scholar during the summer of 2022 through the University of South Florida Florence Science Summer Program in Florence, Italy. His time in Italy provided the opportunity to immerse in another culture and see how people approach life in other countries. He specifically noticed how working individuals cared much less about working hard and making a lot of money but instead focused on enjoying their lives and spending as much time as they could with their loved ones. This taught Philip to live in the moment and be grateful for what he has in life. He also learned that daily frustrations and grievances are insignificant and only add unnecessary stress to life.

Philip credits the Gilman Program with helping him become more passionate about international affairs and being civically engaged. He is aware that some of his Black peers feel apprehensive about the idea of going abroad due to fears of racist encounters and feeling out of place in the host country. Given his positive experiences while being abroad, he wants to help assuage their fears and reassure them. Philip also would like to be a support for LGBTQ students who have concerns about safety abroad. He is happy to share the strategies he used to identify queer-friendly locations and remain watchful while he was abroad.

Philip works as an infectious disease linkage specialist at Tampa General Hospital, helping the mobile clinic to provide testing and treatment for Hepatitis C in vulnerable populations. He also is a volunteer at the Moffit Cancer Center. Prior to this, Philip was a Pre-Health Scholar for three years at the University of South Florida's Morsani College of Medicine. In the future, Philip would like to pursue a master's degree in public health and a Doctor of Medicine. Philip is excited to be a Gilman Alumni Ambassador and connect with low-income students. He specifically wants to show them that going abroad is attainable and educate them about the significance of the Gilman Program and how it can help them achieve their educational goals.

- Hometown: Tallahassee, Florida
- Earned a Bachelor of Science in biomedical sciences with a minor in public health from the University of South Florida (2023)
- Infectious disease linkage specialist at Tampa General Hospital
- Completed the Pre-Health Scholars Program at the University of South Florida, a multiyear academic enrichment, mentoring, and career exploration program for pre-health students

