

William “Billy” Blakey

Gilman Program Alumni Ambassador
Peru, 2022



“My perspective has changed towards realizing how impactful one person can be with a certain mindset and awareness of the needs of others around them. I have been able to transition my ambitions in a way that will benefit others instead of just focusing on my own success.”

Billy studied abroad as a Gilman scholar during the summer of 2022 through the University of Washington Spanish Language and Culture program in Cusco, Peru. His time in Peru enabled him to experience an overseas medical system as he shadowed surgeons, obstetrician-gynecologists, and primary care providers in general medical, maternity, pediatrics, emergency, and ultrasound departments at the Clinica de Ttio. The Clinica is a rural clinic that primarily serves local Quechua Indigenous peoples who travel from around the region to seek medical services. Billy was able to gain knowledge of the Quechua language, culture, and medical ailments that commonly occur in the region, including yellow fever, acute mountain sickness, cutaneous leishmaniasis, malaria, and Chagas disease. Additionally, he was able to earn the remainder of his academic credits for his minor in Spanish.

Billy credits his Gilman Program experience with changing the way he views himself, his aspirations, and the role he wants to fill in his life and others' lives. It also provided clarity on all aspects of his life and proliferated a growth mindset. He is now more confident when overcoming challenges, particularly with obstacles that are outside of his control. He is a better professional, student, and son. His experience left him with an ignited passion for pursuing his goals and working toward success despite feeling uncomfortable. He is an aspiring surgeon and plans to travel and practice medicine overseas in areas with the greatest need. He also plans on completing the MCAT exam and applying to medical school to start in 2024.

Billy is a research study assistant at the MAX Clinic, a pilot HIV healthcare program that provides HIV healthcare and resources for populations that are the most disproportionately affected by HIV and experience the most significant barriers with accessing and maintaining HIV healthcare. He also is a research fellow with the Station1 Frontiers Program, where he is researching the installation of a wave energy converter on the island of Cuttyhunk. Billy is excited to be a Gilman Alumni Ambassador and guide students as they seek opportunities to study abroad. He is especially interested in connecting with students from military families as he comes from a military family.

- Hometown: Shelton, Washington
- Earned a Bachelor of Science in interdisciplinary arts and science with minors in Spanish and global honors from the University of Washington-Tacoma Campus (2023)

