

Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship Information

Eligibility Requirements

- Must be U.S. Citizen, receiving a Federal Pell Grant at time of application or during the term of program.
- In the process of applying to, or accepted for, a credit-bearing in-person study abroad or internship program.
- Program Country or area must be a Level 1 or 2 U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory System or on approved list of Level 3 countries/area. Multiple location programs are eligible.

Scholarship Logistics

- Statement of Purpose Essay can only be 7,000 characters (including spaces), about 1.5 pages, single-spaced.
- Community Impact Essays (Building Mutual Understanding Essay and Follow-on Service Project Proposal (max of 3,000 characters each, including spaces, each).
- No bold/italicizing/underlining. Students should compose the essays in Word first and then copy paste into application.
- Online certifications from KU Study Abroad Program Coordinator and Financial Aid Advisor (listed as Taylor Cole).
- Obtain unofficial transcripts early to make sure they are uploaded by application deadlines.

Scholarship Statement of Purpose Essay Guidelines

The Statement of Purpose Essay is the most important part of the application. Be sure to clearly cover the following items in your essay:

- What impact will this study abroad program and receiving the Gilman Scholarship have on your academic goals? Will you be able to take coursework abroad towards your major or minor requirements at KU? Will you be able to take electives or pursue further language training not available at KU? How will this study abroad program impact any future academic goals, such as graduate school, you may have?
- What impact will this study abroad program and receiving the Gilman Scholarship have on your professional goals? How does your study abroad program relate to your future professional goals? Will you be able to pursue internship or volunteer opportunities that support your overall career goals? Will you be able to learn skills or conduct research that will be necessary to you in your future career?
- What impact will your choice of country have on your experience abroad? What initially inspired you to want to study abroad in this particular country or learn this language? What factors led to your choice of country of study. Are you interested in specific areas of study/courses/country affairs that this country could offer you? Why do you need to study in your country and not in another one? What impact will your choice of program have on your experience abroad? Are there unique components, such as home-stays or service components, which will shape your experience abroad?
- What impact will this study abroad program and receiving the Gilman Scholarship have on you personally? On a personal level, what initially inspired you to want to study abroad and what challenges (such as being a non-traditional student, a student-parent, having a disability, etc.) have you faced academically or in planning to study abroad? How have you met and/or addressed these challenges? What examples of knowledge, skills, experiences will you draw on to meet the challenges of going abroad?

You should make sure your essay is concise. Take out ALL of the fluff like “study abroad is wonderful”! Address the impact your study abroad program will have on your academic AND career goals first. Academic and career goals will be weighed more than personal ones.

Clearly state ALL of the following Gilman diversity preference factors that apply to you (*spell it out in the essay & don't assume they'll figure it out in context*):

- First-generation college student
- Major (sciences/engineering/math)
- Minority student
- LGBTQIA+ student
- Non-traditional student (Veteran, physical/learning disabilities, older students)

Address the following, if applicable, as well:

- Are you a transfer student?
- Did you face any challenges while deciding to study abroad? Turn a negative into a positive.
- Explain if you have a lower GPA and if you have a good reason for this.

Scholarship Community Impact Essays Tips

The Community Impact and Follow-on Service Project essay is the second most important part of your application.

For the Building Mutual Understanding Essay (max of 3000 characters), make a case for how you will serve as an effective citizen diplomat abroad. When you are overseas, how will you contribute to the mission of building mutual understanding between the people of your home community and the people of your host community? How will you represent and share what it means to be an American during your program? How will you seek opportunities to become more culturally engaged and have meaningful interactions with people and cultures different from your own?

For the Follow-on Service Project Proposal (max of 3000 characters), think through how your project will help promote studying abroad and the Gilman scholarship to your peers or community. Your project could be associated with an activity or organization you are already affiliated with, if possible. It should be well-developed, feasible and achievable (you must be able to complete the project within six months of your return to the US).

- What are your project goals? What is your project and what do you plan to do and achieve?
- Who is the project geared towards and WHY? (*examples: science students, because it is harder for them to study abroad with their academic plans or minority students because they are less likely to study abroad*)
- Where and when will your project take place and what is your general timeframe for the project?
- How will you integrate the impact of your experience abroad into your project?
- How will you carry out the project and what tools will you use (venues, groups, online social media, etc.)?

Here are some sample project ideas you could consider (more on Gilman website):

www.gilman scholarship.org/applicants/essays/

- Weekly, biweekly, or monthly publication of stories from abroad in the UDK or Lawrence Journal World, etc.
- Multiple and targeted on-line postings via podcasts, Instagram, blog, etc.
- Submission of articles and photos to the newsletters of the Area Studies Centers
- Targeted information sessions/presentations, cultural activities (ex. dancing or cooking classes etc.) for KU organizations and groups, departmental clubs, student council, HALO, LGBTQIA+, TRIO SES etc. that you may be involved with.
- Community Outreach in Lawrence/Kansas City or your hometown - projects with local elementary or high schools, work with specific community groups, etc.

To be effective, you should include as much detail as possible in your project proposals, including a timeline, and contact information for the organization with which you intend to complete the project. In addition, you should select smaller, more manageable projects and develop them to a greater extent. Be creative!

When writing your essays, be sure you...

1. **Don't write to impress.** Scholarship selection committees have seen and heard it all. Let your credentials and awards speak for themselves. Use your personal statement to talk to your readers about the things that motivate, inspire and shape you. Help them to understand what your specific accomplishments have meant to you, or how they have shaped you. Help them to understand why you care about the things you care about.
2. **Don't write in clichés.** Ask yourself if each and every sentence in your draft reflects some thought, fact, reflection or experience of your own. Avoid sentences that could have been written by absolutely anyone. Avoid stock phrases.
3. **Don't re-write your resume in prose.** Again, selection committees are looking for the person behind the credentials. Avoid laundry lists of activities, etc., and focus on the select few experiences that have meant the most to you, or have had the greatest influence on your development and aims.
4. **Don't be too general or abstract.** Don't distance your reader by using vague references or abstractions in your essay. You may think it sounds more impressive to say "my internship with a renowned environmental organization's project to save an endangered species," but that doesn't really tell the reader what organization you worked for or what species was being helped. They would rather meet the person who worked with the Sierra Club to help save bald eagles.
5. **Don't get too frustrated!** Distilling your life into a compelling, informative one-page personal statement is a challenging task. Think of this as an opportunity, all-too-rare in life, to reflect calmly and creatively on who you are, who you want to be, and what you hope to do with your life.

The Gilman website has a lot of resources (alumni profiles, sample essays and follow-on project ideas, webinars)

Apply online: www.gilman scholarship.org

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