

# Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Information

## Eligibility Requirements

- Must be U.S. citizen, receiving a federal Pell Grant at time of application or during the term of program
- Must be undergraduate student in good standing at accredited institution of higher education in United States
- Must be in process of applying to, or accepted to, credit-bearing in-person study abroad or internship program
- Program country or area must be a Level 1 or 2 according to the U.S. Department of State's [Travel Advisory System](#). Programs with multiple locations are eligible.

## Scholarship Logistics

- Statement of Purpose essays are a maximum of 500 words each (about 1 page, single spaced)
- Representing America Abroad and Hometown Impact essays are maximum of 500 words each (about 1 page, single spaced)
- No bolding/italicizing/underlining. Students should compose the essays in Microsoft Word or Google Docs first and then copy and paste into application. Use 1-inch margins and Times New Roman 12 point font.
- Online certifications from KU Study Abroad & Global Engagement program coordinator (varies depending on program) and financial aid advisor (Dana Hill)
- Obtain unofficial transcripts early to make sure they are uploaded by the application deadline.

## Scholarship Statement of Purpose Essay Guidelines

**The Statement of Purpose essays are the most important part of the application. Be sure to clearly cover the bolded questions below in your essay. (We have included additional, unbolded questions to help you brainstorm and flesh out your answers to the prompts.)**

- **Make the case for why a global academic or professional experience would contribute to your future academic and/or career goals.** How does this program relate to your degree program? Why is it important that you take the courses you will take on your program? How do these courses build on what you have learned at KU, and how will you build upon the knowledge you gain from these courses when you return home? What career are you interested in pursuing? What led you to this career? How will an international experience set you on the path toward your career? How does our globalized world impact your field? How can the cross-cultural skills you gain abroad benefit you professionally?
- **Why did you select your specific program or internship and host country?** What interests you about the specific school/center/program you will be attending? Why this location/program and not another one? What activities will you be able to participate in? What is the institution or location known for? Does this program enable you to have experiences/gain knowledge not available at KU? Are there unique program components (e.g., homestays, research activity, volunteering) that will shape your experience?
- **Please describe specific examples in which your knowledge, skills, and/or experiences (academic, professional, extracurricular and/or volunteer activities, etc.) have equipped you to effectively adapt to and succeed in your host country.** What obstacles have you overcome in your life? What challenges have you faced in college, and what have you learned from these experiences that will help you be successful abroad? (New approaches to learning and time management, working while attending school, mental health challenges, family obligations, etc.) What qualities and knowledge do you have that will be helpful in adapting to a new environment? How have you successfully navigated cultural gaps in the past? What have you learned from interacting with people who are different from you?
- **What specific knowledge and skills do you hope to develop through your experience abroad?** What do you want to get out of your program? What themes, topics, or skills will you be learning? How will the knowledge and skills you are gaining impact your work in the future? Are you learning special skills?

You should make sure your essays are 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 weighted more than personal ones.

## Representing America Abroad and Hometown Impact Essays

The **Representing America Abroad and Hometown Impact** essays are the **second most important part of your application**.

For the Gilman Scholars as Citizen Diplomat essay (max of 500 words), 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 2026, you are also encouraged to articulate any specific plans that you have for showcasing America’s 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. What American ideals do you identify with and want to promote through your interactions with your host community?

For the Contributions to U.S. Communities and Follow-On Service Project Proposal (max of 500 words), 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. It should be well-developed, feasible, and achievable, as you must be able to complete the project within six months of your return to the United States.

- What is your project? What do you plan to do and achieve? What are your project goals?
- How will you raise awareness of the value of study abroad and highlight the support that the Gilman Scholarship offers?
- How will you integrate the impact of your experience abroad into your project? How will you share the knowledge and skills that you gained overseas?
- Who is the primary audience for your follow-on service project, and why have you selected this audience?
- Where and when will your project take place, and what is your general timeframe for the 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](#)):**

- Weekly, biweekly, or monthly publication of stories from abroad in the *UDK* or *Lawrence Journal-World*
- Multiple and targeted online postings via podcasts, Instagram, blogs, etc.
- Submission of articles and photos to the newsletters of the [KU area studies centers](#)
- Targeted information sessions/presentations or cultural activities (such as dancing or cooking classes) for KU organizations and groups, departmental clubs, Student Senate, and other activities that you may be involved with.
- Community outreach in Lawrence or 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 proposal, including a timeline and contact information for the organization with which you intend to complete the project. Focus on a smaller, more manageable project. 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 essays 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 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 rewrite your résumé 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, etc.)**

**Apply online: [www.gilmanscholarship.org](http://www.gilmanscholarship.org)**