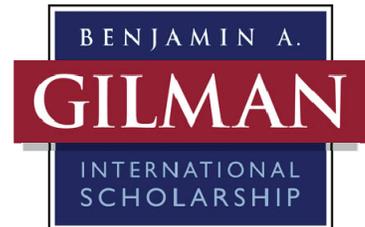


CAMERON CAJA, SOUTH KOREA, 2013

University of Arkansas—Fayetteville
Arkansas



Even with a background in International Relations, Political Science, and Asian Studies, I never could have imagined the life I discovered in South Korea. The Gilman Scholarship allowed me to take part in an amazing program with Soonchunhyang University's "Global Village" Student Community. This extraordinary program is based on creating an environment where domestic Korean students and international exchange students are living in shared "suites." In these suites, the students were immersed in a wide range of cultures every day on a very intimate level.

My classmates included students from Sweden, England, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China, Laos, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, and many others. Even though we came from several diverse countries, we were

all "foreigners" in Korea and we built strong friendships as we discovered this fascinating country together.

"Even though we came from several diverse countries, we were all "foreigners" in Korea and we built strong friendships as we discovered this fascinating country together."

Academically, my semester abroad was an exceptional addition to my major studies. The faculty at Soonchun Hyang included foreign diplomats, executives of multinational corporations, and leading scholars of government and politics. These instructors were able to share an invaluable perspective on inter-Asian politics I never could have received in the United States.

Perhaps some of the most rewarding experiences were those triggered by my research for Reach the World, the Gilman Program's partnering organization. As I would seek out answers to questions about Korean society for a class of young students in the U.S., I was able to

meet some captivating people along the way. Examples of these include Frank Quintero (Mayor of Glendale, California) and Byung-hyo Choi (Republic of Korea Ambassador to the United States). I was also able to meet with employees of Arirang Radio, a leading distributor of Korean media throughout the world and a powerful agent in the rising global influence of Korean business and culture.

It was an unforgettable semester. I feel like there is still so much to learn and share. I cannot wait to return after graduation to look for career opportunities in East-West Relations and globalized youth education. Even after my return to the U.S., The Gilman Program continues to provide unique opportunities for service and professional networking through the U.S. Department of State's International Exchange Alumni Network and the Gilman Alumni Ambassador Program. I cannot show my appreciation for the U.S. Department of State, IIE and the Gilman Program enough. I am so grateful that my study abroad advisor encouraged me to apply; it has dramatically broadened my horizons and opened countless doors to my future.

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

After receiving the Gilman Scholarship, I was given the opportunity to fulfill my Follow-on Service Project through their partnership with the educational nonprofit, Reach the World.

While in Korea, I was given weekly topics to explore and report on to elementary students in Brooklyn, New York. This required me to study all aspects of my host country's language, traditions,

ethics, architecture, environment, and more. This further encouraged me to discover Korea in a far deeper way and to share my passion for cross-cultural youth education and global citizenship.