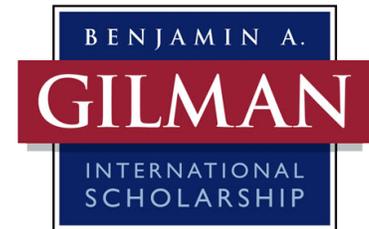


MEGAN FINCK, SPAIN, 2001

Messiah College
Pennsylvania



Studying abroad in Spain had a profound impact on my professional and personal life. Growing up and attending college in small towns in Pennsylvania did not afford much opportunity to experience cultural diversity. That is why it was important for me to incorporate that learning into the university curriculum. Studying abroad made this task much easier due to being immersed in Spanish culture and language.

In considering career paths after graduation, I knew that I wanted to play a part in providing these international opportunities for others and am thrilled to be doing so on a daily basis. I accepted a position with NAFSA: National Association of International Educators, a non-profit entity that supports international student and

study abroad advisors, upon returning from my study abroad program. In addition to that, I currently manage international executive degree programs at Georgetown University. This position has provided me the opportunity to work and travel with U.S. and international participants, giving me a truly global experience at work. It has been a very unique and thrilling opportunity.

I believe the most challenging aspect from my time spent in Barcelona is what I would call “city shock.” Having spent the vast majority of my life in rural towns, it was quite a contrast to find myself living in a European metropolis, and the adjustment was not an easy one. However I learned to adapt very quickly and was able to maneuver around the city like a pro. In fact, as a direct result of the time I spent in Barcelona, I have made the deliberate choice to live in a city ever since. It is this exposure to life beyond the confines of our backgrounds that I find so thrilling about the experience of studying abroad

I’ve found one of the most rewarding aspects of studying abroad has been the exposure to

different ideas and different cultures. In times of uncertainty across the globe, it is more important than ever to continue cultivating international experiences so that we can share these stories with our friends, families, classmates, coworkers, and communities when we return.

In my opinion, this is the real value and the true strength of the Gilman Scholarship Program to offer individuals from various backgrounds access to international exposure which they would not have otherwise. This is the essence of international education, and I am grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to be part of the Gilman story.

“In times of uncertainty across the globe, it is more important than ever to continue cultivating international experiences so that we can share these stories with our friends, families, classmates, coworkers, and communities “

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

I was a Gilman Scholar in the days of dial-up Internet and before social media tools like Facebook and Instagram made photo-sharing an instant and easy option. So for my Follow-On Service project I prepared a photo album to share at

study abroad fairs on my college campus and with high school students in my hometown to encourage them to incorporate an international learning component to their educational pursuits. This allowed students to see what it was

like for me to study in a different country and help show them that they too could pursue education abroad.