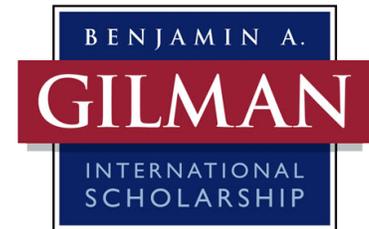


PATRICE FRANCIS, JAPAN, 2012

Hampton University
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Ever since I started learning Japanese in the summer of my sophomore year of high school, I knew I wanted to study abroad. After graduating I matriculated to Hampton University. I was excited to continue learning the language, but I discovered Japanese classes were no longer offered. I was disappointed, but not discouraged. I maintained my lessons through tutoring and self-study. I was able to finally go to Japan during my junior year when I received the Gilman Scholarship. I studied at Kwansai Gakuin University (KGU) in Osaka, Japan through the United Study Abroad Consortium (USAC) for an academic year. This was my first time in Asia and it was the longest period of time that I have spent outside of the United States.

I arrived in Osaka with the goal of learning about Japanese culture while improving my language proficiency.

With this goal in mind, I began my academic year abroad. I decided to take the intensive language track, which meant that most of my classes focused on Japanese. I was taking three Japanese classes my first semester alone: Listening and Speaking, Reading, and Writing.

Outside of my formal language study I had many opportunities to learn about Japanese culture. What really helped me get acclimated to life in Japan was the Nihongo Partner system, a unique aspect of my program. This system pairs each student with a KGU student volunteer to provide support and help study abroad students acclimate to the new environment. I became great friends with my Nihongo Partners. They introduced me to different foods and aspects of Japanese culture, and provided amazing insight and perspective into Japanese life. I was also able to stay in a home stay for my first semester.

Living in a home-stay was nothing short of a memorable experience. Learning Japanese in a classroom environment alone would not have helped me reach the level of proficiency I have now. Japanese was not just a language I was learning, it became a part of my daily life. As a result, I gained the confidence to use Japanese in a variety of situations.

My experiences from my academic year abroad have strengthened my interest in International Relations and becoming a Foreign Service Officer. Currently I am in my final year at Hampton University working towards receiving my bachelors degree. Once I graduate, I plan on attending enrolling in a graduate program for International Relations and then apply to enter the U.S. Foreign Service. Sharing my culture while learning about Japanese culture helped me to form a new perspective regarding what it means to be an American. It was truly an amazing experience that would not have been possible without scholarships like the Gilman Scholarship. I am truly thankful to have been a recipient.

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FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

I created my Follow-on Service Project because I wanted to encourage more psychology majors to study abroad at my university. Working with my department and the study abroad office, I created a study abroad timeline that can be used to help psychology majors plan for a semester abroad without having

to worry about not graduating on time.

Without worrying about a delayed graduation, more psychology students will be open to considering a study abroad experience. For the second part of my project I decided to give a presentation to discuss

specific aspects of international study such as the application process, choosing a program, and scholarship opportunities like the Gilman Scholarship. Additionally, I created a Twitter account for students to ask questions about studying abroad.