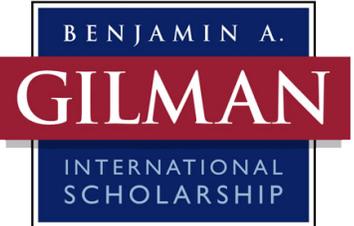


BRADLEY CROFFORD, BENIN, 2012

Southern Nazarene University
Oklahoma



My study abroad experience involved a ten-week management internship with the U.S. Department of State at the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou, Benin. My internship responsibilities included assessing workplace safety, developing materials regarding embassy housing, and assisting a visiting fire marshal. I also had the opportunity to lead two film programs and develop some social media materials with the public diplomacy section. As part of the Embassy delegation, I traveled to two facility inaugurations, one in southwestern Benin and one in north-central Benin. I also

participated in other Embassy trips, including one to visit a Peace Corps Volunteer's work site and one to tour the Universite d'Abomey-Calavi. Besides my involvements with the Embassy, I gained knowledge on the local culture through visits to multiple markets, such as the enormous Dantokpa market in Cotonou, and historic sites, like the Slave Road in Ouidah.

This study abroad experience has impacted me enormously. On a professional level, my internship has confirmed my interest in an international career, and I am now planning to pursue a career with the Foreign Service. Academically, the internship served as the basis for six credit hours toward my cultural and communication studies degree. My study abroad experience also helped provide important cultural perspective as I worked on my honors thesis focusing on factors contributing to

Benin's stability since becoming a democracy in the early 1990s. I presented this paper at Oklahoma State University's research symposium when I returned to the U.S.

"On a professional level, my internship has confirmed my interest in an international career, and I am now planning to pursue a career with the Foreign Service."

As a result of the Gilman Scholarship and my experience abroad, I am applying for the Thomas Pickering Graduate Fellowship and plan on pursuing a graduate degree in international studies and a career with the Foreign Service.

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

My Follow-on Service Project involved raising awareness of the Gilman Scholarship at Southern Nazarene University (SNU) by leveraging my multiple leadership positions; the target audience was the university's student body. First, I used my position as editor-in-chief of the university's online student newspaper to publish an opinion article about studying abroad entitled "Studying abroad is more valuable and more

possible than you think." In it, I briefly describe some of the opportunities other SNU students and I have had by studying abroad, and I specifically mention (and link to) the Gilman Scholarship as a potential scholarship. In addition, I presented to the Honor's Program on study abroad opportunities and hosted a booth at SNU's study abroad fair. My experiences also served as the basis for my intercultural

practicum project, one of my Honors Program requirements. For this project, I designed and wrote a report that reflects on my experiences, suggests things to do and see in Benin, and provides tips for studying abroad, including seeking funding from programs such as the Gilman Scholarship.