



Transcript

Welcome:

Lindsay: Thank you once again everyone for joining us. I'm Lindsay Calvert, I'm the Assistant Director of the Gilman International Scholarship Program here at the Institute of International Education. It's my pleasure to bring you this webinar with great content with our partners at MIUSA and with a great Gilman Scholarship alumna. We are really excited to present this information to students who are interested in applying for the Gilman Scholarship or advisors interested in helping students with disabilities study abroad. We appreciate the time you've taken today to join us on this webinar.

On behalf of the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs and the Institute of International Education (IIE) we welcome you for joining our webinar today.

As I mentioned, I'm Lindsay Calvert I've been working with the Gilman Scholarship Program and my colleague, Shawna Hurley, will be helping field questions later on in the presentation. She also works with the Gilman Scholarship Program here at IIE.

Presenters:

Those who will be presenting today will be myself, I will talk about the Gilman Scholarship program for all you interested folks, as well as Ashley Bryant, the project coordinator from Mobility International USA and the National Clearinghouse on Disability Exchange (NCDE), and Amanda Parkman who received a Gilman Scholarship to study abroad in Australia in 2008 from the University of Arizona. I'm thrilled to have them as our guests to provide additional information for all of you who are interested in this topic.

U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs (ECA):

Before we get started, I want to recognize our sponsors at the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs. Some of you might be familiar with the Bureau or you may not be, but we are a sponsored program, as well as MIUSA is a sponsored program. We are thrilled that they have been able to continue to promote friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations as their goal through such programs that we administer. We are thrilled that they continue to support these initiatives to help underrepresented student populations, especially those students with disabilities to help get them the opportunities of international education and exchange.

So, by all means, please continue to find more great information and initiatives and programs offered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, on their website.

Study Abroad with a Disability:

What we'll do is have Ashley speak from Mobility International USA and I'll speak about the Gilman Scholarship and then we'll have Amanda speak. We will have a section for questions and answers afterward. Please feel free to type in at any time, the questions you may have regarding any of the topics we talk about and we'll try and address those as best we

can at the end of this presentation. And of course, we'll provide our contact information, as you see here, should you need more assistance or have further questions. We'll get started with Ashley.

Ashley: Hi, everyone. I just want to say thanks again to you all for joining and I'd especially like to thank Lindsay and the other staff from Gilman and IIE for inviting me to join this discussion on how students with disabilities can get involved and study abroad. Again, my name is Ashley Bryant, I'm from Mobility International USA, which we call MIUSA for short, which works to empower people with disabilities around the world. MIUSA and the ECA, which Lindsay was just talking about, have been working together for a long time to ensure that people with disabilities are part of that effort to promote peace and understanding through international exchange.

National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE):

If only people without disabilities were to study or volunteer abroad, then people around the world don't get a complete picture of the diversity of our country and all the contributions that we have to offer. So, in order to encourage more people with disabilities to participate in international exchange, the ECA sponsors MIUSA to administer a project called the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange. Through this NCDE project, MIUSA can give free advising to people with disabilities about getting what they need to go abroad. We work with exchange programs and study abroad offices who want to make their programs more accessible for participants with disabilities. To do that, we offer tip sheets on disability and change topics. You could go to our website and find tips for going abroad with Asperger's or going abroad with a chronic health disability or with a mental health condition. We have tips for bringing a personal assistant or a sign language interpreter abroad or traveling with a service dog, if that's what you're looking for.

We talk to a lot of people with disabilities who have studied or volunteered abroad so they can share their stories and believe me, we have a lot of stories that they've shared. The NCDE, does not run any of its own exchange programs or provide any kinds of scholarships or Financial Aid, but if you just want some assistance about learning, about the different kinds of opportunities out there, then we can definitely direct you to resources.

MIUSA website:

A great place to start is by checking out our website which is www.miusa.org/ncde and we have a page specifically for Americans with disabilities who want information about going abroad, including links to resources for exchange opportunities abroad, plus tips for funding your study abroad. There is also important information that people with disabilities should know about before they go abroad including strategies for disclosing their disability to the exchange program, and also how to make sure that they get their disability related needs met during the exchange.

Concerns of Study Abroad Students with Disabilities:

So, here we are, what are some other things that students with disabilities need to know about before taking that plunge? One is balancing their needs with available resources. So in other words, will you need any accommodations during your international exchange program? And if so, what kind? You might find that you need different accommodations than what you've used at home or in the past. You might find that your preferred accommodations aren't available in the countries you'll be visiting. If you're planning on asking for accommodations, you might need to advocate for yourself, consider making some compromises or sacrifices, and be able to distinguish between your necessary accommodations, versus your preferred accommodations.

So for example, a student with a vision impairment who uses a service dog will either have to decide if she is prepared for taking on the challenge of traveling with her dog or if there are alternative ways that she is willing to travel without the service dog, such as using a cane or sighted guide. And there are plenty of instances where students with disabilities were used to using one kind of arrangement or service at home and sometimes they would use something else while traveling.

Also finding information about resources abroad: what disability related specialists and organizations in the host country can provide services, whether it's wheelchair repairs or mental health counseling or even hearing aid battery supplies. So it can really help to connect with disability organizations in the countries that you're visiting. They can provide information about accessibility, but they can also connect you with other people who have disabilities in their communities.

One thing that NCDE might be able to help with in this instance, we can possibly refer you to organizations in the country where you're thinking about going. We might also be able to connect you with other travelers with disabilities who have gone to that country before. Like I mentioned before, we've interviewed a lot of travelers, asked them for their stories and most of them are very eager to share their experiences with others.

Another consideration is insurance for preexisting conditions. You will want to make sure you have travel health insurance that will meet your needs. Even if your exchange program provides insurance, make sure that it covers preexisting conditions related to your disability, if necessary. We find it makes a world of difference when exchange programs can offer a group plan for all of their participants, whereby they can negotiate with the insurance companies to make sure that preexisting conditions are covered. That's worked really well in the past.

Accessibility of location and information: so we often get the question, which country is best for someone who has my disability? And I just want to say first that people with disabilities, all types, by the way, have traveled to or lived in virtually all parts of the world. Keep in mind, accessibility to one person does not necessarily mean it's accessible to someone else. Think about what, specifically, would make the place accessible to you. For example, a student who uses a wheelchair, wanting to study abroad in South Korea might find out that the campus there is very hilly. But don't automatically assume that you shouldn't go there, just because you use a wheelchair and you're going to this hilly place. But instead, gather as much information as possible before you make a decision about whether or not to go somewhere. Just as people without disabilities going abroad, base your decision on where to go on your personal and academic interests, not just based on disability.

Getting what you need in a cross cultural context: this means be prepared for different cultural attitudes and perspectives on disabilities in the countries where you're going to visit. There might be different ways of requesting disability accommodations, for example, or different ways of asking or refusing assistance from strangers. Also, the treatment that you receive as a visitor with a disability might be different from what people with disabilities who live in that country experience in their daily lives. There's a lot to think about.

Common Barriers:

So what are some of the common barriers when studying abroad with a disability or trying to get there? One is attitudinal. And this might mean attitudinal barriers from parents, peers, the exchange program, or people in the host country. Sometimes it stems from attitudinal barriers from the person themselves, thinking, oh it's going to be too difficult or too risky, I don't want to set myself up for failure. These kind of attitudinal barriers can be difficult to overcome, but I think it will help to talk to other people with disabilities who have gone abroad and can show what's possible and also to think through the options. Know who your allies are. Again, you have friends who have gone abroad. Getting buy in from your parents. People who work for the exchange organizations want to see you succeed. They can be a great ally for getting into the right mindset of going abroad.

Internal barriers. This might mean your university or the exchange program or the overseas sites. Maybe there's some sort of lack of a policy that could make the program more inclusive or maybe there's worry about a student suspected of having a mental health condition who maybe gets screened out when they shouldn't have, or other internal processes that could cause barriers.

Financial barriers are a big factor for a lot of students without disabilities, as well as students with disabilities. Especially for students with disabilities who might be asking themselves "how will I pay for a personal assistant overseas?" Or "will I be able to receive my Medicaid benefits while I'm abroad?" If not "how do I make sure those will continue when I get back to the United States?"

Logistical barriers as well. Can I bring my medication and supplies with me? If not, where can I find them in the host country. What do I need to do to make sure I can bring my service dog abroad? What happens if my power wheelchair breaks down in the other country? So these logistical barriers are not uncommon, but actually, thinking through them can be a good launching point for getting prepared, thinking of all the different scenarios and having a contingency plan for them. Will actually be a great step in your early stages of planning.

Working Through Barriers:

So working through barriers: what does it take to get through the logistical, attitudinal, internal barriers? It takes flexibility. If necessary, what are you willing to give up, or change or do differently in order to make going abroad a reality? If you can't have everything exactly the same or everything you're used to, back in the U.S., it's kind of up to you how much of a challenge you want to take upon yourselves. If you're the adventurous type and love a good challenge and want adventure and you're willing to do things beyond your comfort zone, in terms of how you receive accommodations, if any or, how accessible the place, the site is, if you're not at that comfort level or if you're not up for that challenge, you might choose to go to a place that has had experience working with participants with disabilities before, or a place where it's easier to find out about site accessibility for example. So, know your limits, know your comfort zone and know your threshold for taking on challenges.

It also takes a lot of self advocacy to work through barriers. Most people with disabilities have a lot of practice with being self advocates. And finding allies, like I said, I was talking about allies, getting them on your side and to advocate for you as well.

One thing a lot of people don't realize is how much creativity goes into making an exchange experience accessible. For example, one exchange organization had a student with Asperger's on their study abroad program to Spain. And the student was kind of nervous about feeling at ease during social events and excursions. What the exchange program did was they offered a stipend to another student to be that student's chaperone or buddy, someone to accompany them to these social events and excursions and make her feel more at ease.

It takes a lot of creative thinking, and persistence as well. Don't get discouraged if your initial plans fall through, or if you're not accepted to the program the first time or the second time. I've known some people who have applied for either scholarship programs or international exchange programs and if they don't get it the first time, they'll apply either to the same program again or to a different program and we usually end up hearing about their having ended up going abroad. You know, just do whatever it takes to, to get yourself abroad, even if it doesn't work out the first time, but have that persistence.

I spoke about this earlier, but connecting locally, that means not just networking with disability organizations in the host country, but also really connecting with the disability community in the country. It can be a great way to learn about the culture and its, we've known a lot of, for example, deaf students who have really been able to enrich their experience abroad by meeting members of the deaf community and their host country, and in some cases, have had a real advantage over students without disabilities, by having that kind of extra community and an extra way to immerse themselves in the culture.

And finally the NCDE, we really want to help you work through any barriers you encounter. Whether attitudinal, logistical; we can, again, work with you or we can also work with international exchange providers, study abroad offices, and exchange companies with their questions, if they have questions about working with participants with disabilities.

As a student with a disability, you are the expert on your own disability. Whereas the exchange provider's going to be an expert on what to expect while you're at their program site abroad. And we can help kind of facilitate a conversation so that both of your expertises are, are recognized so that you can really gain the information that you need to make an informed decision about what you want to do abroad.

Other Funding Sources:

So, in addition to programs like the Gilman Scholarship Program, you might be able to look into other sources of funding. One that some students with disabilities receive is Vocational Rehabilitation funds, as well as Supplemental Security Income funds. What a lot of students who receive these funds don't know, in some cases, you can use that money towards your international exchange experience. For example, some students with disabilities have used VR funds towards tuition in the host country or one person used it to rent a golf cart for their host campus, which is really large. So, if you do receive VR or SSI funds, learn whether you qualify to take those abroad with you.

Institutional grants: most universities will offer different kinds of Financial Aid and funding, including opportunities specifically for study abroad. If you haven't already, contact your Study Abroad Office or the Financial Aid Office of your institution.

Community sources: this means organizations, clubs in your community, you might have heard of things like Rotary or Lions Club that you can connect with, and in some cases, they might have ideas for fund raising or they may be able to sponsor you or part of some aspect of your exchange fund.

Other diversity scholarships: A lot of people with disabilities will contact us and say "are there scholarships for students with disabilities?" And we say, yes, there are, however, don't limit yourself to only applying for disability related scholarships. Make sure you apply for the same kinds of scholarships that everyone else applies for-Gilman's a perfect example, especially those that value diversity and want more students who are underrepresented in study abroad to apply. And Gilman, again, is the perfect example for that. We can also suggest others as well.

And finally, cost sharing and negotiating how accommodations will be funded is a strategy that a lot of students with disabilities have used. For example, who will pay for sign language interpreters or other services like that. In some cases, those costs were shared by the home institution, the host institution, the study abroad office and the disability services office and the exchange program provider. So that might be one strategy to make sure you have what you need while abroad.

Disability Scholarships:

I talked about disability specific scholarships, and again, make sure you apply for anything that you're eligible for, really. But you might also want to know about some scholarships through, for example, 1800wheelchair.com which awards scholarships to high school, college and university students. The American Association on Health and Disability offers a scholarship with preference for students with disabilities majoring in disability studies and other specific subjects. There are other disability organizations as well that award scholarships to students, including Alexander Graham Bell, National Federation of the Blind, Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, Spina Bifida Association of America. These are just a few examples of the different kinds of scholarships out there. On our website, we have a page of examples of scholarships including disability specific ones, as well as links to scholarship search engines, so it's easier to find out about what's out there and do I qualify?

Stay Updated:

Another piece of advice I have for you to learn about not just scholarships, but also international opportunities such as Gilman, is to stay updated with the NCDE and with MIUSA through our e newsletter, we have a monthly newsletter. If

you're on Facebook or Twitter, please follow us. We make a lot of announcements about scholarships that we hear about, exchange opportunities, stories, tips, and other events, events such as webinars like these, or conferences. It's a great way to stay in the know and learn about all the different kinds of opportunities out there.

So, just to conclude, I want to emphasize that studying abroad is a real option for you and for other people with disabilities. In fact, we've known a few people with disabilities who have been awarded Gilman Scholarships to fund study abroad in countries from England, to Poland, to India. They had physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health related disabilities and more. It's just an incredible opportunity to fund your experience abroad. Whether it's your first time going abroad or maybe your second or third. I encourage you all to apply and good luck.

Gilman Scholarship Program Overview:

Lindsay: Thank you, so much, Ashley for all that wonderful information. I've never seen so many other scholarship resources that I think so many students should, like you said, apply to all the ones they're eligible for. That's something that the Gilman Scholarship Program always encourages any applicant. Whether you're eligible for the Gilman Scholarship, we highly encourage you to apply to as many scholarships as possible. It's in your best interest to see how much support and funding you could receive to study abroad.

So, I'll move on to talk about the Gilman Scholarship Program and how you all, as students, or applicants who are interested in applying for the scholarship can create a more competitive application. For those who have heard about the Gilman Scholarship, hopefully you hear more from this webinar that will help you either apply for a scholarship or advise students who are applying. The mission of the Gilman Scholarship Program is to diversify the kinds of students who study abroad and the regions and countries where they go. We look at diversity in the broadest sense, diversity in terms of how we want our U.S. represented abroad, and of course our U.S. is very diverse and we are really trying to encourage students of high financial need, students who are normally underrepresented in education abroad, to help them take advantage of this opportunity, whether that's to hone a second language, to participate in an international internship abroad, to receive academic credit in experience and international exchange, that is the greatest goal we can hope to offer to the various populations who are normally underrepresented in study abroad. That does include students with disabilities, it also includes students who are of an ethnic minority, students attending a community college, first generation college students, students studying STEM majors, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The Gilman Scholarship has been around since 2001. We've been sponsored by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by IIE in our Houston office since its inception. We're so proud to have these numbers and continue to grow upon the success of this program to where we have awarded over 13,000 U.S. undergraduate students of high financial need to study abroad who have come from over 1,100 institutions across the U.S. and have studied in 130 countries around the world. So, we hope that those who are interested in applying become a part of that legacy of this program because we are helping you all study abroad, but also, seeing that impact that it's having on you and as you return to the U.S.

Institute of International Education (IIE):

So, just to give you a little brief information about the Institute of International Education, if you're not familiar, we are an independent non-profit founded in 1919. Our headquarters are in New York. The Gilman Scholarship Program is run out of our Houston office. So that's why everything is in central time, so please keep that in mind especially when we talk about the deadline. IIE is among the world's largest and most experienced international education and training organizations. We're committed to delivering program excellence to a diverse range of participants, sponsors and donors. Many people are familiar with various types of student exchange programs that we administer, such as the Fulbright programs as well as the National Security Education Program. There are a variety of scholarships available to

various types of students, so we highly encourage you to look into any opportunity available to you. You can find more information about our organization and the various programs that we run and administer on our website.

Program Overview & Critical Need Language Award:

So to give you an overview of the Gilman International Scholarship Program, we are able to award up to \$5,000 to a student to study abroad for up to one academic year. We do offer, for students who are eligible to receive \$8,000 if they are studying one of these critical need languages in a country that predominantly speaks that language.

So for example, if you're interested in studying Arabic, whether you're a beginner or advanced, you're eligible to receive potentially \$8,000 if you indicate that you are studying that language in your application. That is really all you need to do within the application to be eligible, is indicate which language and it has to be one of these languages listed. That's all dialects of Arabic, all dialects of Chinese, Bahasa Indonesia, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Swahili, certain dialects of Persian, certain dialects of Turkic and specific Indic dialects. Take that into consideration if you're looking to enhance a second language or third language or whatever language number you're on. We highly encourage you to study any language abroad, but if you are studying one of these critical need languages, you could receive up to \$8,000.

Eligibility:

So, it's very important to understand who is eligible to apply for and receive a Gilman Scholarship. Since we are sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's ECA Bureau, we are encouraging students who are U.S. citizens to look into this opportunity. If you are U.S. naturalized citizen, you may definitely apply. If you are a student in progress of obtaining your citizenship, you may apply, however, you must show proof of U.S. citizenship in order to actually receive the scholarship funds. If you have questions about your citizenship and eligibility for this program, feel free to contact our scholarship program and we'd be happy to talk with you, to determine if you're eligible.

Of course, you need to be an undergraduate student, matriculated in a U.S. institution of higher education in the U.S. You need to be a student of good standing at the school. You must be either receiving the Federal Pell Grant at the time of application or the time that you're studying abroad. So for instance, if you're looking to study abroad this summer, 2013, and you received the Federal Pell Grant in the fall, but not the spring, then unfortunately you wouldn't be eligible unless you are receiving the Pell Grant in the summer and unfortunately, I don't believe there are any more summer Pell Grants. However, if you received it this entire year or for this spring as you're currently applying for the summer, you're more than welcome to apply, as long as you meet all the other eligibility requirements.

If you have questions about your specific Pell Grant status, feel free to contact our office. We're happy to help you clarify any questions you may have. You need to find a program that fits your needs, but is eligible to receive academic credit. You'd receive credit from your program, whatever program that may be. It could be a direct enrolment to a foreign institution, you could participate in an international internship for credit, or maybe it's a service learning program that you'll receive academic credit or just your traditional program of educational courses that do transfer back to your home institution. So as long as, whatever type of program you're participating in abroad, will receive academic credit, that's an eligible program.

And you can study abroad in any place, any country in the world, as long as it is not currently under a U.S. Department of State travel warning or that it's not Cuba. If you have questions about the country you're interested in, feel free to contact us or speak with your advisors on your campus. We hope you find, out of the, over hundred plus countries that are available to you, you find one that fits your needs in terms of what you're interested in doing abroad and what you're interested in gaining and learning from that country.

The final eligibility requirement is that you study abroad for a minimum of four weeks and maximum of one academic year. We consider four weeks to be 28 consecutive days in at least one country. So if you're considering a program that

is less than 28 days in one country, unfortunately it's not an eligible program. If you have questions about the program length or the country or the type of program, again, by all means, we'll provide our contact information and you can feel free to ask the questions.

Application Deadlines:

So what's also important to know is our application deadlines. Currently we have open our online application for the summer and fall of 2013 academic terms. So if your program starts in this summer or your program starts in the fall and either is a semester long program or academic year program starting in the fall of 2013, those are the two applications that are open right now. And the deadline is coming up next Tuesday, March 5th. As you see here, they must be submitted online by 11:59 p.m. central time. We highly encourage you, if you haven't already started your scholarship application, to get started right away so you have ample time to devote to make sure that all the correct information is in there and we'll go through, briefly, the essays that you need to submit as well. And of course, you want to spend time working with your advisors. And we'll get into that as well.

So, it's really critical that you do devote enough time, and I think, from previous surveys we've had of our applicants, it does take between five to ten hours or more to complete their application. It's a very straightforward application, you just want to make sure that you're putting your best foot forward. It's a nationally competitive scholarship and we want to make sure that your voice is heard. The more competitive your application, the more we can hear your voice and the impact it will have on you. So by all means, check our website for future dates and deadlines. The next application cycle will be open for Spring 2014 programs and that will open sometime in August.

How to Apply:

So, to apply, it's an online application process, everything is done online. You complete the portion of the application that includes basic information, as well as your study abroad program information. You do not need to be accepted into your program in order to apply for the Gilman Scholarship. So that's a very important fact that I think everybody should be aware of. You need to choose the program that's your top choice if you're applying to multiple programs and put that information in the application so that we can, hopefully award you for that program if you're accepted to it. Should there be any changes to your program in the future, you just feel free to contact us to let us know.

You will need to upload your transcript or transcripts into the online application. We have plenty of resources regarding how to upload transcripts and the requirement for transcripts to be submitted into your application. So please take a look at those, or listen to the videos, if you need to, so that you are understanding clearly how to upload your transcripts. We do require that for your home institutions, the school you're currently attending, you provide an official transcript. If you previously attended other institutions as a degree seeking student, then you will need to provide transcripts for those as well, but they do not need to be official. We still have pretty strict guidelines as to what we consider official and unofficial, so again, please reference that information on our website.

Once you submit your online application, the Study Abroad and Financial Aid advisors that you selected in your online application will receive a notification that it's their turn to submit a certification of your application. Which is simply questions to verify information you provided and/or to correct information so that we have the most accurate application from you moving forward as we consider it through a selection process. All these steps are outlined on our website as well, if you have further questions.

Selection Criteria:

Keep in mind our selection criteria-this information is also provided on our website. There are two essays that you need to submit in your online applications, the statement of purpose essay and the follow-on service project proposal. I'll try

and go into as much detail as I can with the time we have in the next few slides. So I'll kind of skip over those for a moment and talk about those shortly.

Diversity of applicants: like I mentioned before, we look at diversity in the broadest sense. If you identify with a particular type of diversity that I mentioned before or you see that we encourage on our website, please disclose that information if you feel comfortable doing so. That will help the selection panel who is reviewing the application to have a better understanding of who you are, what your background is, and what makes you unique. So, please feel free to disclose that information, if you're uncomfortable doing so, you're not required to. Keep that in mind as you start to think about what your statement of purpose essay will be and we'll talk about that again.

Country of destination: it's critical for you to include in your essay where you're going, what program, and the reasons why. You know, what is that connection? And we're looking for students who are studying in countries all across the world, but we're really encouraging students who are studying outside of Western Europe, and New Zealand or Australia, those tend to be more traditional locations of study. So we really want to encourage students to think outside, maybe look towards Asia, Middle East, Latin America and Africa. There are so many countries out there and so many programs and institutions available to students to do a variety of things that you might be interested in. So, take a look at what your options are and what your best fit is.

Length of study, as I mentioned before, it ranges from four weeks to an academic year. We do highly encourage students to study abroad for longer lengths of time, but we do understand that there are limitations for some in terms of how long they can study abroad due to other obligations they may have at home. Please indicate that information in your statement of purpose, so that's clear to the reader, what your limitations might be and that you're trying to make the most of the time abroad that you have.

Academic progress and performance: So, like I mentioned before, per the eligibility that the student is in good standing and we do see those transcripts and we do receive your transcripts, so that information is reviewed. We do not have a GPA requirement, but we do want to see that a student is making progress, either in their field of study or overall, and that they can prove themselves to be a successful student abroad, just as they can be here at home. If there are any issues that you think are important to note in your essay, please bring those forward. You can inform us, maybe, that for one semester, you had to work full time, therefore you weren't able to devote as much time to your studies and maybe that impacted your academics. Instances like those that you feel comfortable sharing, by all means, please do so in your statement of purpose essay.

Fields of study: we are open to all fields of study, so, whatever your major might be or whatever academic and career interests are to pursue while abroad, we're open to all of those. But we do want to help those students who normally aren't studying abroad due to more strict curriculum, such as those in sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics. We want to give the students the opportunity to study abroad and get international exchange experience as well. There are more and more programs available to those students. Talk about what your field of study is in your essay and indicate what your goals are in terms of that.

We also are looking at a lack of previous undergraduate study abroad experience. If you've studied abroad before, that's perfectly fine for academic credit, but we do want to help students who haven't had that opportunity before. So we're taking that into consideration.

The U.S. Institution and State Distribution: when you look at diversity in terms of the types of students as well as where they're coming from and what schools. We want to make sure that there's a great representation from all over the U.S. We don't have any quotas. That's not something we look at. We want to make sure we're representing the entire U.S. while abroad through our Gilman Scholars.

Essays:

I would love to talk more about essays and statement of purpose and follow-on service project proposal. I tried to put some key factors about the statement of purpose into what I just spoke about in terms of the selection criteria. A lot of that information, besides your basic study abroad program information, you need to flush out into your statement of purpose essay. We need to know who you are, what's important to you, academically and professionally and how those particular types of goals can be achieved through your study abroad experience. Make that connection with your programs.

So each essay is a text box in the online system, but we highly recommend that you create it in a word processing program such as Word Document, save that so you have a record of it and copy and paste that into the text box in the online application. Do note that it's 7,000 characters, including spaces, which is the maximum amount allowed in the text box.

- **Statement of Purpose Essay:**

To keep in mind, we have videos and other resources available about the statement of purpose essay on our website. Just keep in mind, it's pretty much your personal interview, you'll never really meet our selection panelists, you won't have an in person interview. So everything you want them to know about you that addresses the questions of how will the Gilman Scholarship help you accomplish these goals and what has inspired you to study abroad and what challenges have you faced or overcome, those are questions you definitely need to answer and personally inform the panelists of what those goals are and how you can achieve them.

Tips for Statement of Purpose Essay:

So here are some tips. We do have answer prompts in our online application to help guide you in terms of understanding the information that's needed to know about you and your goals. Definitely use transitions and we cannot say it enough, but have your essay proof read. That can definitely bump your application up a notch because of how competitive it can be with a well-read essay. So don't wait until the last minute, you'll definitely need help having those essays proof read.

- **Follow-on Service Project Proposal:**

So let me jump into the follow-on service project proposal for a little bit. I definitely want to have time to have Amanda speak. Essentially the follow-on service project is a project that you'll propose within your online application. So you need to start thinking, if you haven't already, what your project will be. It's a self-designed project to promote study abroad and the Gilman Scholarship. It can be conducted on your home campus or local community, and it must be completed within six months of your return to the U.S. You need to explain in your proposal how you'll give back, what's your plan, how will you go about doing it, who will you work with? We recommend you use activities and organizations that you're already involved in as an inspiration. Maybe there's particular clubs, student clubs or multiple clubs you're involved with at school or an academic department. Maybe you're part of a STEM major, you're a biology major and you notice that your classmates aren't thinking about study abroad, so you can bring back the knowledge and inspiration for them. Or maybe you're highly involved in your community, you recognize that you are involved in a community of a population that doesn't think about studying abroad either. So you can inspire that group through your experience abroad.

Tips for the Follow-on Service Project:

Definitely design a plan of action and consider these items, your target audience, the impact on that audience, how you'll publicize your event, what you plan to do, who will you collaborate with? What are the arrangements you need to

make before you go abroad? What's your timeline? How can you make sure that you can complete that project within six months of your return, and the tools you'll be able to use to carry out your project.

So what's really key is to make sure it's a creative project, but feasible for you. The more creative, yet feasible for you, that will stand out to selection panelists. We want to make sure that students are doing things that are not only beneficial to them, but beneficial and impactful to their audience.

Examples of Follow-on Service Projects:

So we have examples here, but we have many examples of follow-on service projects and alumni who have returned, who have successfully completed projects on our website. I highly encourage you to look at those.

Important Reminders:

And just some reminders, think about what you want to do when you study abroad and how that experience will affect your goals. Plan your essays and your project as early as possible, keeping in mind your current interests and activities and write your essays in a word processor and either forward them to an advisor to review or use your campus writing center. Those resources, hopefully are available to you, to help you make your essays and your applications a bit more competitive. And of course, at any time, contact our program with any questions.

Multimedia Resources:

So you can catch updates from us, more resources at all these different areas on social media. You can access them on our website. We also have a great blogging group going on right now. If you haven't followed us before, follow our Gilman Scholars that are currently abroad. Maybe they're in a country you're interested in going, or you've been to that country and you can understand their experiences, but they're there sharing their experience to hopefully help others understand that country and that culture, and what it's like to be a study abroad student.

Other Resources for Study Abroad:

We also have other resources available, so, like Ashley mentioned, look for as many opportunities that can help you fund your study abroad experience. We help provide those as well.

Gilman Scholar Amanda Parkman:

Without further ado, we'll jump into Amanda and give you some time to speak, because I think you have a lot of great information to share as well.

Amanda: Hi, everyone. I'm excited to be here with you. As Lindsay mentioned, I'm a Gilman Scholar. I did study abroad. First I want to share a little about me. My name is Amanda. I'm a graduate from the University of Arizona. I graduated with my Bachelor's Degree. Now I'm working toward my Master's Degree in Higher Education, and I'm also working full time at the University of Arizona as a Learning Specialist. When I'm not in classes, I really like to utilize my winter and summer breaks to indulge in traveling and my experience in Australia, my first traveling experience, really fostered that passion for me. Some of the places I have been now are New York City, Chicago and San Diego. I really attribute my experience studying abroad to giving me the courage to do more traveling.

I studied abroad in 2008. I studied at the University of Wollongong in Australia as an exchange program with a leadership program I was involved in here at the U of A. Studying abroad was definitely the best thing I've ever done. I gained so much memory, new experiences and friendships that is priceless. As I go through my presentation, I'll discuss the process I went through in studying abroad and the many benefits I gained from it.

To begin with some of the challenges I faced. So the first challenge was figuring out where I could go. I had ideas where I wanted to go, but given that I use a power wheelchair to get around, I had to discover what was feasible. I heard horror stories, but what happened in those cases is that they didn't plan. They didn't ask questions and didn't do the research. I made sure I did. I met with my study abroad advisor and we came up with places I'd be interested in studying. I contacted them and learned more about their accessibility. I continued to do that along the way too, asking people for advice, and getting a better idea what was accessible. For example, I had never flown on my own before. I asked around and found people who had and asked them how they did it.

When I was in Australia, I also faced a few issues. But because of my planning, it didn't ruin my experience. For example, I had issues with my wheelchair on the first day I got there. I blew a fuse on the wheelchair charger, but because I had already researched and contacted medical and wheelchair repair stores in Wollongong, I knew who to contact and also brought my manual wheelchair, so I was still able to get around.

During the planning process, I sometimes managed issues with getting sponsors. For example, when emailing the housing at UOW, sometimes I would take months to receive a response. So you need to keep in mind that these individuals are busy and you have to take initiative and be persistent, but not pushy or rude. I also had issues with the airlines. The airlines wanted to charge me extra for both wheelchairs. Unfortunately because they're not U.S. airlines, they could, but through persistence and initiative, I got in contact with a representative of U.S. airlines who contacted the Australian airline and they were able to convince them not to charge me the extra wheelchair. Yes, studying abroad takes a lot of work, but it's totally worth it. I encourage you to check out my blog for other challenges I faced and how I overcame them.

How did the Gilman Scholarship impact me? The Gilman Scholarship impacted me in multiple ways. First and foremost, the Gilman Scholarship provided the financial assistance I needed to be able to study abroad. When I returned, Gilman continued to keep me connected. My follow up project was to encourage other students to study abroad. I had three groups I wanted to target and encourage. First-generation college students, students in the leadership program and those with disabilities. I held information sessions where I shared my experience and answered questions. Because of Gilman, I continued to have opportunities such as this to share my experience, encourage others with disabilities to study abroad because it's something I really care about, because I truly believe more should and could study abroad. By providing the opportunity to share my story, Gilman has not only contributed to my personal goals but also professional. Opportunities such as this, information discussions that I conducted on follow up projects has given me the presentation skills and practice I needed in my professional life. I need these skills in my current roles where I do many presentations.

Why is that you should study abroad? I cannot fully express the sense of accomplishment and freedom you feel when you study abroad. I can still remember my first time at Sydney Harbor and I was there with one of my friends from UA. She was also studying abroad in Australia at another university. We met up there and were spending Easter weekend in Sydney. I can remember looking out over the harbor, towards the bridge, it was at night and everything was sparkling. It was magical, I thought "wow, I'm really here, I'm really doing this, if I can do this, I can do anything." You grow so much from this experience. You discover more of who you are and who you want to be. It sounds cliché, but it's true. My confidence and my ability in who I am grew from this experience. It's hard not to see how capable and strong you are when you put yourself outside your comfort zone.

Another really important aspect to me is the friendships I grew. To this day, some of the people I consider my closest friends live there and I can spend hours discussing all the amazing memories and experiences I shared with them. Studying abroad really opens opportunities for you, as well in your future. When it comes to professional careers, it sets you apart from other applicants. Employers know that it takes a motivated, dedicated individual to go through the process of applying, getting accepted and going abroad. Plus you realize the experience makes the individual more well rounded and therefore able to accommodate into a workplace. Those qualities just multiply for individuals with disabilities because it requires more planning and preparation, not to mention the other obstacles one must face which

requires tenacity and courage. You can see on the screen my interview I did with Mobility International and also my blog linked to it. On my blog, you can get my contact information. If you have questions about things I talked about in the presentation, I did a lot of outreach to other individuals asking them questions and how they did it, so feel free to contact me if you want more information or have questions.

Lindsay: Thanks, Amanda, for sharing that. I think you're such an inspiration for being a persistent and knowledgeable person about where you want to go, what you want to do, because I think it really enhanced your overall experience. I am so pleased to hear that you have such an impactful experience, and I think many other students have as well. Like you mentioned, it can impact you not only while you're abroad, but years to come from that timeframe, you've been back in the U.S. for some time now and you definitely see those skills that you enhanced and worked on while abroad and maybe even didn't know you had. So I think that's such a great inspiration, hopefully to many other students to think a little bit harder about where they want to go and how they can make it happen. Like you said, it might be a lot of work, but it's really worth it. That goes the same with applying the applications for scholarships. It looks like there's a ton of scholarship applications that you might be eligible for and it might take a lot of work, but I think they'll be so much happier applying to those and potentially receiving that funding than if you hadn't at all.

Contact Information:

At this time, that concludes our presentation portion. As you see on the screen, this is the contact information for the Gilman Scholarship and we ask that applicants contact the Gilman program according to their last name. So those with last names A-D have a particular contact, last names E-K have another, L-Q and R-Z. Please contact your specific representative and they'd be happy to answer any questions you have. If you're an advisor, e-mail us at Gilmanadvisors@IIE.org and we have specific staff members ready to help you as well. You can find more information about the Gilman Scholarship Program, at our website at www.iie.org/Gilman. So, at this time, I think we already have some questions in queue that Shawna's going to ask us.

Shawna: Thanks Lindsay, we do have a few questions that have come in so far, I'll start with the first one. We had a question from a student who has a chronic illness that they sometimes find difficult to describe here, in the states. For example, simply describing some of the symptoms such as tiredness or fatigue can sometimes make it sound less serious than it is. Do you have any advice on how to deal with or how students can best convey their situation while abroad?

Lindsay: That's a very good question, I think it differs for every type of student and every student who is applying. In terms of the Gilman Scholarship application, I highly suggest you be honest throughout your entire application process of course. When you are providing information about yourself, you might think it doesn't sound as serious or severe, per se, but I think if you're honest with what the condition is and, and what your goals are, even to overcome those challenges, that's really important to show.

Ashley: This is Ashley, and I do agree with Lindsay, but I would also say, maybe focus on an application, I would definitely agree with Lindsay, but when you're talking to your exchange provider or exchange advisors, I'd focus more on your specific needs, rather than your symptoms, so that they can understand what they need to do to make the program accessible to you. And to make sure that you're included in all of the major components of the program.

Shawna: Thanks, Ashley. Our next question I believe is from an advisor. If a student isn't registered with the College Access or Disability Services Office, how do you address providing him or her with disability services or accommodations while abroad?

Ashley: That's a great question, so once students are accepted, and this goes for all students, whether or not you suspect someone of having a disability. In some cases, they'll have an apparent disability where you can see it, maybe they're a wheelchair user, maybe they have vision impairment, but some students who don't have apparent disabilities like learning disabilities are very represented and study abroad, among students who have disabilities. Or mental health

related disabilities, in those cases, you're not going to know, necessarily, unless they disclose to you. A lot of exchange providers have expressed need for students to disclose because it can really be helpful and advance planning, but they don't want to accidentally screen out participants either. And they want to create a welcoming environment for students to feel like they can disclose without being discriminated against.

For this reason, one thing I'd suggest is after all students are accepted to the program, at that point, you should send out a mass message or as part of the accepted applicant packet, all the participants should receive something that says "if you will need disability related accommodations, please check them or describe them here or allow us to refer you to our Accessible Education Center or Disability Resources Office on campus" and then make sure to connect with the Disability Services advisors as well and be able to stay in communication and open up the channels for collaboration. So I hope that's helpful. I'd be happy to share more as well through e mail.

Shawna: I have another question from a student who, their disability is pending full diagnosis and therefore, they're not currently able to get accommodations. Ashley, do you have any advice for those students or others who might be in this situation where they're waiting for full diagnosis?

Ashley: I would say the trend now is to provide accommodations based on what would create a level playing field for the student, rather than that kind of diagnosis, diagnostic side, going less from procedural, more towards providing accommodations based on conversation or gathering other resources that might not be as formal. Whereas, it used to be, you wait for a formal diagnostic test, but in this case, being able to describe what would the student need to be able to accomplish this goal and be successful without giving them an unfair advantage, whether or not they have beneficial diagnose of a disability. I'd say in your application while you're applying for the Gilman Scholarship, there's an essay question about what kinds of barriers or challenges, in your life, have you faced? I'd say whether or not your disability is formally diagnosed, that's still an opportunity to be frank about what your experiences have been and what your challenges have been. So, I hope that is helpful.

Shawna: Great, thank you, Ashley. The next question I have is for Amanda. How far in advance you started planning your study abroad experience?

Amanda: That's a good question. I started my sophomore year, I believe it was the fall semester. I started looking into what programs I was interested, and by, I could actually, might have been more my spring semester, it's been a little bit. I know it was about a year prior. So I spent a semester looking into the program and then the following semester, I actually applied and it was a matter of waiting to hear back from the program, but during that time, I was getting other things together, like scholarships and applying to scholarships. Like Ashley mentioned, you really should apply to scholarships, other than ones just related to having a disability. I also found sponsors. I wrote to community members and business members and asked them for donations. I got one who paid for my airline tickets from Tucson to Australia. So that's something to consider. I spent a year in advance prepping, applying and waiting.

Shawna: Thank you, Amanda. I have one more question, I know the Gilman Scholarship is specifically for undergraduate students, but are there opportunities or resources available for graduate students?

Lindsay: Yes, there definitely are. I encourage you to go to our other resources page of the Gilman website. You can find other opportunities there that might be for undergraduate students, graduate students or both, but also there's a link to studyabroadfunding.org. It's a great comprehensive website. It's a searchable database to help any type of students find any type of study abroad scholarship opportunity that they might be eligible for. So definitely great place to start, of course it takes some time to search and find the ones that are of interest to you. I find that Amanda is definitely really resourceful and those are great suggestions she gave as well. Whether you're an undergraduate student or not. You can tap into your community as another option. Any other questions, Shawna?

Shawna: It looks like that's all the questions we have that have come in so far.

Lindsay: Okay, well, I want to thank everyone for joining us on the webinar. We really appreciate you taking the time and hope this was very helpful to you all. And want to thank Ashley Bryant with MIUSA for providing so much great information for everyone and again, she is a great resource, so please feel free to contact her regarding any questions as a student with a disability who wants to study abroad or an advisor who wants to help those students. Thank you so much, Amanda for joining us. You're such an inspiration for the many things that you were able to accomplish in order to study abroad and the great things you continue to do. We look forward to keeping in touch with you and sharing your experience, hopefully it continues to help other students study abroad. And thanks, Shawna for helping us with questions. Thanks everyone, we hope you have a great rest of your day and feel free to contact the Gilman Program or access any of our various resources to help students study abroad on our website. Thank you.

Gilman Scholarship Program Webinar
The Institute of International Education (IIE)
February 25, 2013

CAPTIONING PROVIDED BY:
ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION SERVICES, LLC