**Gilman Essay Tips**

1. **Make yourself stand out!** Reviewers don’t know anything about you outside of your age and gender. One of the primary criterion is your personal diversity. Arkansas is a very underrepresented state in study abroad, so that is essential to mention. Other diversity characteristics could include: being non-traditional in age, community college transfer students, single parents (especially with young children), married, disabled (physically or learning disabled), students of color, veterans/active military, STEM majors or first generation college students. Some things to consider:
   1. What is unique about you as a person?
   2. Do you have a unique interest or hobby?
   3. Are you involved with something on campus or in the community?
   4. What are your goals for study abroad above and beyond the formal requirements of your program?
2. **If you are studying in a traditional destination** (Western Europe, Australia, or New Zealand), explain in detail why you selected your program, from an academic and/or career-planning perspective, as Gilman typically favors non-traditional locations and competition for traditional locations is high! There needs to be a **good reason for the country choice** such as your personal circumstances or the demands of your major. Why **this** country?
3. **Make a clear case for how/why your program is relevant to your major, career goals, future plan, or all of the above.** Talk about your program (is it traditional study abroad or an internship?), classes you will take, and how they will help you achieve your goals. You could include things such as cost and type of living arrangements. Do you have a personal tie to this country? Tell them!
4. Do not talk about shopping, sightseeing, or how you think it seems like a fun program. Remember, this is study abroad and not just traveling for fun. Gilman makes a firm distinction between those who have studied abroad for credit before, and those who have traveled, even extensively, but not in an academic context. Students who have studied abroad previously, especially if it was to the same country, are at a disadvantage. You would need to address why this program will add something you didn’t receive from the prior program. An ideal situation would be where you attended a short term trip and it began your interest in travel and now you’re returning for a longer program.
5. Length of study is a primary criterion. If your program barely qualifies for Gilman (21 days in one country), keep in mind there will be others who are going for longer. Make sure to emphasize the length of your program, whether it will be a year long, or a short-term program. Justify why you chose your program, the credits you are receiving, and the importance of this program on your personal, academic, and career goals.
6. Academic performance is a secondary criterion. **There is no minimum GPA for the Gilman.** Students with fairly low GPAs can be competitive. However, there should be some explanation of a weak academic performance and ideally it would be isolated to an early semester and you would see improvement over the course of your academic career. Some items to consider:
   1. Has your GPA steadily improved?
   2. Do you work a large number of hours each week, and can’t devote as much time to your studies?
   3. Do you have extra obligations such as running the family business, or caring for young or elderly family members?
   4. Did you have one particularly rough semester due to illness, family situation, etc?
7. Treat the essays like an in-person interview. Don’t assume the reader knows anything about you or values study abroad. Tell the reader why you value study abroad, and why you are investing your time and money in this experience.. **Did you give a good justification for why you were going abroad and clear sense of direction for your future career, academic, and personal goals?**
8. The personal statement is the most important part of the application. They will largely decide based on this essay. It should be about 1,000 words long. The follow-up service project essay should be about 800 words and will likely be less personal.

**Tips for the Follow on Service Project**

For the Follow-up service project you do not need to reinvent the wheel. You need a clearly stated target audience, **promote study abroad and the Gilman**, and a feasible project that you can complete it within six months.

* Explain the who, what, when, where, and why of your follow-on project.
* The target audience should be groups you are a part of and who you might like to reach. It could be your high school, community college, or classes in your major.
* Describe what impact the project will have on your audience. What are the intended outcomes with the audience-what do you hope they will DO as a result of this project?
* If you can propose something other than a presentation or information table, that is ideal. Consider creative uses such as: technology, media, and photography!
* You should seek out permission for any presentations you plan to give, articles you plan to write, etc. and explicitly state if you have campus partners/offices who have agreed to work with you.
* Students who have already gotten approvals for the plan stand out.

**General Tips**

1. Have the Study Abroad staff, University Writing Center, or a faculty member read your essay. They can check for spelling, clarity, and grammar.
2. Don’t write the essay online at the last minute. Take some time with your essay and revise it at least once.
3. Thoroughly answer all of the questions asked. For help on how to answer the questions, see the tips above!
4. Plan ahead! You will have to request an official transcript, so request this in the early stages of your application, not the day before your application is due.
5. Watch the deadlines, submit your application and essay in enough time, and make sure you’ve communicated with Study Abroad staff about your essay submission and program selection!
6. Your study abroad advisor is Emily Bell/Cox and your financial aid advisor is Kimberly Herron. Once you apply, we will be notified of your application and will certify by the certification date.