



Essay Transcript

Lee: Hello and welcome back to the Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship Program Podcast. I am your host Lee Rivers and joining me today is Tiffany Throne. Tiffany currently works as the Program Assistant for the Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship Program. Thanks for joining me today Tiffany.

Tiffany: Hello, thank you for having me Lee.

Lee: Happy to have you Tiffany. Within the Gilman Scholarship application, students must complete two essays, the Statement of Purpose Essay and the Follow-on Service Project Proposal. An application is not considered complete until an applicant completes both of these compositions. Today we are going to spend a little bit of time looking at both of these essays and we are going to hopefully give our audience, give our listeners just some advice about what they can do to have a strong Statement of Purpose Essay and Follow-on Project Proposal.

Now before we dive into discussing essay content, I want to ease the minds of you listeners by letting you know that we are not asking you to write a dissertation here, in fact, there is a 7,000 character limit on these essays, which is equivalent to about a page or two in a word document. And so, don't be intimidated. The key to typing a good essay is to be clear and concise about your goals. You also want to make sure you take advantage of the wealth of knowledge around you. By this I mean have a trusted advisor or professor read over your initial drafts before submitting it. I cannot even begin to express the importance of getting feedback from other people around you. Not just your peers, but professors and advisors as well. This is very important. With that said, let's go ahead and first discuss the Statement of Purpose essay.

Tiffany: Okay Lee, here we go. When composing your Statement of Purpose essay it is helpful to address the impact that your study abroad program will have on your academic, professional, and personal goals. Now, keep that in mind and also address the impact that the Gilman Scholarship would have on your achievement of those goals if you were to receive it. As you are drawing up your essay, think about what and/or who has inspired you to study abroad and what challenges you have faced in planning to study abroad. Are you a non-traditional student? Are

you a student in an underrepresented field of study? Or are you a student that has a disability? This essay should really disclose what your goals and inspirations are in life. Let the selection committee get an insight on who you are and how the Gilman Scholarship will help you with your study abroad experience.

Lee: Hey Tiffany, that is really good insight right there. It is also important to note that unlike a lot of other scholarship programs, we don't require letters of reference or a host interviews. And so these essays that we are speaking about here are really your time to shine, really your time to articulate what these goals and ambitions are that you have. If you still have questions concerning what to say in your Statement of Purpose essay, please do check out our website. There we have bulleted points that have specific questions that you can address in your essay. Like I said before, these are short, so keep it a page or two. Do you care to share anymore thoughts on the Statement of Purpose essay Tiffany?

Tiffany: It is important to plan ahead and not wait until the last minute to write these essays. It is painfully obvious when students do so. If you make a statement like "I plan to study aboard" or "I am going to submerge myself in the culture," your chances of being selected for a scholarship drop tremendously. Such hasty grammatical errors and clarity issues can be caught and corrected if you took the time to have a trusted advisor or professor review your essays before submitting them.

Lee: Okay Tiffany, well I think we pretty well covered the Statement of Purpose essay. Would you now share a little bit of information with our audience about the Follow-on Service Project Proposal?

Tiffany: The purpose of the Follow-on Project Proposal is to expand the impact of the Gilman Scholarship after a student returns from abroad. The goals of the Follow-on are two fold. The first objective is to design a project that helps to promote international education and the second part is that your project also promotes the Gilman Scholarship. This project can be done on your home campus or in your local community and must be completed within six months of your return home.

Creativity is welcome with these project propels, but the project must also be feasible. Something we always suggest to students is to take an activity, an organization that you are already involved in, or a pre-existing passion and craft your Follow-on Proposal around that.

Lee: As you said Tiffany, using something that you are already investing your time in like an on campus club or committee organization can be used as a great outlet to fulfill your obligation to the Gilman Program. If I may use myself as an example, as an undergraduate student I applied for the Gilman Scholarship Program and at the time I was working as a multi-cultural ambassador for the university. And so what I did, I simply took my obligations to the Gilman Scholarship Program and applied them to the work that I was already doing with the university. And so in a sense I was not only an ambassador for the university, but I became an ambassador for international education and a spokesperson for the Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship Program. What are some other keys to success Tiffany?

Tiffany: Develop a plan of action. Think of your proposal as a blueprint. The more structured your blueprint, is the easier it will be to execute your plan. Now, I want you to keep these questions in mind. What is the timeline for my project and how will this impact my target audience? How will I carry out my project? Are there methods I can utilize, which can assist me in achieving my project goals and reaching my target audience? What impact will the methods I use have on my audience?

Now, let me stress this again. The most critical aspect of these student essays and any other essay for a nationally competitive scholarship is to ensure that it is proofread prior to submission. Applicants that do not have their essays proofread before submission fair poorly during the selection process.

Lee: I couldn't agree more Tiffany. I would advise applicants to first compose the essay on a word document and then forward that document to a professor or advisor so they could review it and once you have their approval then and only then will your essay be ready to be submitted.

Okay, quick review to sum up everything that we've covered here today concerning student essays. First, it is important to set aside some time to think about why it is you want to participate in a study abroad program. It's important to think about what this experience is going to do for you personally, professionally, and academically. You also want to take some time to plan out what you are going to do once you return to the states to promote international education and the Benjamin Gilman Scholarship Program. Next, once you finish your drafts of the essays have a trusted advisor, professor, or even somebody at the writing center take a look at your work and give you some feedback on it. That way by the time you submit

your application you can rest at ease knowing that you put forth your best work. Lastly, if you have any questions concerning anything that you have not been able to find the answers to on the website, please do get in touch with us. Tiffany, I would like to thank you once again for taking time out of your busy schedule to come and chat with me.

Tiffany: Thanks for having me Lee. And I am positive that we are going to have some excellent essays.

Lee: Most definitely. Be sure to tune in next time as we cover more questions concerning the Benjamin Gilman International Scholarship. Goodbye.