



Transcript

Introduction

Welcome to the Gilman International Scholarship Program's Composing Competitive Essays video. One of the most important components to your Gilman International Scholarship application is completing your essays: the Statement of Purpose essay and the Follow-on Service Project proposal. These essays are closely reviewed during the selection process. This video will go in-depth with understanding how to compose competitive essays for your Gilman Scholarship application and the specific guidelines for each required essay.

Getting Prepared

Did you know that the prompt questions for the essays are always available? Whether you are currently applying for the Gilman Scholarship or will be applying in the future, you can begin your essays at any time by referencing the Gilman website or in the online application, when available. It is in your best interest to start your essays as early as possible. Starting your essays in advance allows time for preparation. Let's take a look at what goes into preparation for composing competitive essays.

Word Processing Program

Within the Gilman online application you will be provided with text boxes for each required essay. You may type directly into the text box to compose your essay; however, we encourage you to compose your essay first in a word processing program, such as Microsoft Word. Then copy and paste your essay into the text box provided in the online application. This will allow you to save your essays and ensure that your information is not lost due to a session timeout in the online application system. Also, you can have a digital copy of your essay to send for proofreading or utilize as a basis for other applications.

There is a 7,000 character limit per essay, which includes spaces. This limit is approximately 1.5 pages, single-spaced in a word processing program. When you are ready to transfer your essays to your application make sure to double check your essays for the possibility of being cut off due to exceeding character limit. Additionally, do not format your essays in the word processing program (i.e. bold, underline, italics) because your formatting will not be retained upon transferring. We have provided limited formatting tools in the text boxes should you decide to utilize them.

Work with your Advisors

It is important to talk with your study abroad advisor prior to completing your essays. Your study abroad advisor can provide you with ideas for subjects to cover in your Statement of Purpose Essay. They can also help you develop a creative Follow-on Service Project. Your advisors may have participated in selection panels for scholarship programs and

can give you some great insight into what makes an interesting and competitive essay. If your study abroad advisor is not available, you may consider working with an academic advisor and/or your institution's writing center. If you have saved the digital file of your essay, they can review it and provide you valuable feedback.

Statement of Purpose Essay

The Statement of Purpose essay is your chance to personalize your application. You will not be interviewed by the selection committee, so their only chance to get to know you is through your essays. When composing the Statement of Purpose essay it is important to address the impact that your study abroad program will have on your academic, professional, and personal goals. You should also address the impact that receiving the Gilman Scholarship would have on your achievement of these goals. Be mindful of the prompt questions that are provided to help guide the fluidity of your essay and address key points, including:

- Coursework towards your major or minor and availability abroad;
- Reasons you chose the particular country and program;
- Your country knowledge and language acquisition;
- Your career goals and professional development and how they align with your program and country choices;
- Your inspiration for study abroad;
- Your anticipated personal growth; and
- Challenges you may face and are willing to overcome in order to study abroad.

What makes you unique? All students are unique in one way or another, but it is up to you to point out why you are different. You can reference the selection criteria for applications on the Gilman website. We encourage you to highlight how you meet any of the criteria by disclosing this information in your Statement of Purpose essay. If you are not comfortable disclosing certain information, you are not obligated to do so.

Follow-on Service Project Proposal

Should you be selected to receive a Gilman Scholarship, you will be required to carry out a Follow-on Service Project upon your return to the U.S., which promotes the Gilman Scholarship Program and international education on your home campus and/or in your community. All applicants will be required to write a proposal in their application explaining how they will give back by inspiring others to pursue their own experiences abroad. Projects should maximize the impact of your experience abroad by extending the benefits you received to your campus and community. Projects should be clear, able to be completed within six months of your return to the U.S. from your study abroad program, and have obtainable goals. Be mindful of the prompt questions that are provided to help guide the fluidity of your proposal. Consider these key points when composing your proposal:

- Your target audience – are you identifying a group that helps advance the Gilman Program's mission;
- The impact your project will have on your audience – how will you encourage them;
- Methods of publicity – how will you inform them;
- Collaboration with organizations, student groups, etc. – work with groups you're already involved with;
- Any preliminary arrangements and contacts – create a solid project foundation and speak to collaborators early;
- Timeline to complete your project – can it be done within six months of your return to the U.S.; and

- Tools you may need – considering this should be a no to low-cost project, how will you share your project or convey your message.

Gilman Scholars have proposed and carried out a wide range of Follow-on Service Projects. We encourage all applicants to propose a unique Follow-on Service Project that highlights their individual background, experiences abroad, talents and skills. Let's look at some examples of projects that Gilman Scholars have carried out.

- Organizing a pen-pal program between a local classroom and a classroom in the student's host country.
- Development of a brochure or informational flyer specific to that field of study that is then posted in the study abroad office.
- Serving as an office representative at campus fairs and events by sharing information on study abroad and the Gilman Scholarship Program.
- Volunteering or working in the study abroad office as a Peer Mentor/Advisor to potential study abroad students.
- Submitting a weekly or monthly article on their experiences overseas to their campus or hometown newspaper, thereby sharing information with a wide range of readers.

This is by no means an exhaustive list and we look forward to continue to receive unique, individual proposals from all applicants. You can find more examples on the Gilman website as well as watch videos of Gilman alumni who have successfully carried out their project that can serve as inspiration for your proposed project. There is no exact science to writing the perfect proposal, but the guidance the Gilman Program provides and that of your advisors can really help you write a strong proposal.

Polishing your Essays

Proofread

One of the most important things to remember for any essay is to have an additional set of eyes review your writing. Ask an advisor, a professor, or writing center staff with ample time to give you feedback and to make revisions prior to the deadline and submitting your application. Spell check and grammar check are fine, but a good proofreader will find things that your word processing software will not. For example, "study abroad" is often spelled incorrectly in essays as "study aboard." Both are spelled correctly according to spell check, but the latter is incorrect in context. In addition, a proofreader can often make suggestions on how to clarify a point that may not make sense to someone else.

Spelling and Grammar Check

Before submitting your application, be sure to double check your essay. Did you spell the names of cities correctly or even the Gilman Scholarship Program? Spell check will not always correct these mistakes. Be sure you have proper punctuation and do not type your essay in all lower case or all upper case letters. Most importantly, check for correct grammar. Grammar check will not always correct your sentence properly so it is important to have someone else look at your essay thoroughly.

Organize your Essays

Your essays should be in paragraph format and include transitions. The organization of your essays is vital to the success of any essay. Hold the organization of your essays to high importance. Think of bricks building a house without mortar.

Lack of mortar would cause the house to fall apart without it. You need paragraph formatting, transitions and key phrases to build thoughts together in a coherent manner.

Conclusion

The information and advice provided to you on composing competitive essays is designed to help you succeed as a Gilman Scholarship applicant. We understand that in addition to your current coursework, extracurricular activities, work and/or family obligations, that you may feel too busy to prepare your essays; however, we encourage you to put in as much time and effort as you can. Think of the essays you must submit for your courses and instead of an A+ your goal is to receive several thousand dollars to help you study abroad. Typically, applicants spend about 5-10 hours writing and revising their essays. If you were to spend at least 5 hours on your essays, you could equate that to about \$1,000 an hour if you are awarded a full scholarship – not a bad return on time investment!

In addition to this video, we have provided many resources on the Gilman website for you to explore and utilize at your convenience. If you have any questions or need further information, please visit the Contact Us page to contact the appropriate Gilman staff by phone or email.