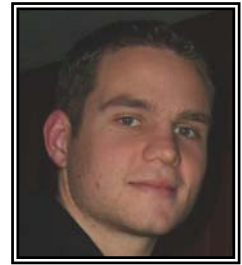


## Gilman Alumni Representative

### Robert May

United Arab Emirates, Spring 2009  
University of South Carolina, Columbia



Robert "RJ" May was born and raised in Newport News, Virginia and as an active member of his community he was awarded an NROTC Marine Corps Option Scholarship to the University of South Carolina. Unfortunately, RJ suffered traumatic injuries to his lower spine his first semester and had to undergo multiple corrective operations. His medical dis-enrollment from the program followed. Determined to serve his country, RJ shifted his focus to the study of areas of strategic importance to the United States. He was awarded a Gilman Program Scholarship in December 2008 to the American University of Dubai. While there, RJ completed a Middle Eastern Studies Program, which also included beginning Arabic classes. During his six months overseas, RJ traveled to 18 different countries and experienced a wide array of different cultures and customs. Along The way he met high profile public figures like the former President of India A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, former Secretary of Education Margaret Spelling, and Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York. In addition to meeting these and other individuals, RJ had the opportunity to see and visit some of the world's most breathtaking places of natural beauty, man's greatest engineering marvels, and ruins from past civilizations.

In gratitude and obligation to fulfill the terms of his scholarship, RJ has undertaken a self-designed, multifaceted Gilman Follow-on Project that includes reaching out to both high school and college students. RJ spent two days at his former high school discussing the application process, and opportunities offered by the Gilman Program and the values of studying abroad. In addition to encouraging young students to think ahead, he also has joined the Virtual Advising Network or "VAN" at USC, which helps prospective study abroad participants to be in contact with fellow students who have recently returned from studying overseas. RJ posted blogs while in Dubai so that other students, faculty, and interested parties could have a firsthand look at his experiences. Furthermore, RJ has promised his time and resources to the Study Abroad Office as a peer advisor for study abroad candidates.

RJ is currently a senior and will graduate Magna Cum Laude with a B.A. in Political Science and Criminal Justice in December. He is awaiting replies from Law schools for the entry in the Fall of 2010 and from government agencies for employment opportunities. Because of his time overseas, RJ's career goals have been solidified, his perceptions of the world confirmed, and his desire to contribute to the betterment of society deepened. He only wishes that through his efforts to promote the Gilman International Scholarship Program that other students will also make the decision to change their lives by studying abroad.



*As a Gilman Scholarship recipient in Dubai, RJ was invited to attend an Education Without Borders international conference.*

*RJ not only had the opportunity to study in the UAE, but also visited many places, met diverse people, and learned from each new experience.*

