

Video Transcript - Gilman Scholarship Essay Advice

What makes a good follow-on project?

Raul Avalos – The follow on project I think should really be focused on a couple of issues. I think that it should be looking at the country that they are going to, the community that they are returning to and their major. So, kind of combining those three things together. A lot of projects that we see can be while on the applicant side, this is a great idea, I want to present this information to my fellow classmates. There is always one more thing that the applicant can do on that follow-on project whether it be a community service aspect of it, whether it be communicating back to the country that they had returned from. Something always else can be done. I would definitely have the applicants think of the follow-on project as an extension of their Gilman scholarship experience. So it does not stop when you come back, it continues on. I think a lot of them need to understand that the follow on project is just as important as the scholarship itself.

Kathleen Harris – This is meant to be an occasion for a student who has gotten a benefit to be able to explain what he or she would do to follow on to pay that forward. It is really important for that not to be kind of vague or just amorphous or not thought through. Every time somebody does something nice for you, you ought to be thinking about how you can pay it forward. In a practical kind of way the student needs to be able to imagine what that is and how that rolls out. It is not even meant just to explain practically what the program would be that the kid would do, but those good follow on projects to me reveal that connection that the student has. A lot of times they will connect with say this office helped me, so I want to go back and help that office to. Those are the ones that really resonate with me because that means that that kid is really getting it, that they are not just getting the benefit for themselves they are a part of a big wreathing device. I think that a good follow on project is one that really connects with a student's own experience, and has got those networks/connections that they are willing to exploit, frankly, for other peoples benefit.

Tammy Oaks – The review for follow on projects would be how are you really going to do it? Give the specifics. How is your attempts at sharing the Gilman scholarship, and sharing the components of study abroad and their importance, what are you going to do to really get the word out? It is nice to do a blog, it is nice to do a Facebook, but what can you do beyond a standard normal type thing? What special efforts are you willing to make on behalf of the Gilman and on behalf of study abroad that is going to set you project a part from all of the others.

What Makes an Essay Strong & Compelling?

Brian Stiegler – The strongest essays are the ones that focus most on the student applicant themselves and less on frankly the program, or the philosophy behind having a crosscultural experience. All of the panelists believe in education abroad so you don't have to convince them of that. They need to know about you and where you come from, what you strengths and weaknesses are and what sort of challenges you have overcome because that helps to contextualize the rest of your application. The only place that the panelists get to see that is in that personal statement. The more personal that statement is, that essay is, for the individual student, the stronger that entire application process is.

Tammy Oaks – Well, I think that students that really want to be competitive in the essay portion need to give us information why is this program applicable to them. How is this program going to benefit them from a career perspective? How has the program personally tided them? What do they want to achieve? What stands out to them as being relevant and important? Most importantly, share something personal that really ties in why they want to go to a particular place and what is it about the program that they are most interested in?

Kathleen Harris – You know I think a lot of times people have great stories to tell about themselves but they don't get what is great about it. They don't have the perspective on themselves to be able to understand that their story is particular, it is outstanding, it is something that is actually theirs. One of the things that I tell people to do when they are trying to really explain who they are, is that they don't just rely on their own impressions of the essay, that they ask people who know them really well to read it over. To be able to tell them hey you forgot about that other thing that you did, or you forgot about this thing, you forgot about that event or that activity. Even though it is a personal statement, I think a lot of times people make the mistake of thinking that it is only me that is going to read it. It is really important that they get that kind of perspective on it as a personal statement, as well, if that makes sense. So, to make a compelling essay in other words it has to tell your truth, but you can't just rely on yourself in some ways for that. You have to get the perspective of other people that know you well when you are going through that process, or you will miss really important things.