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Studying abroad in England has been pivotal in providing me excellent future opportunities including graduate school and a U.S. Fulbright Fellowship. While at Oxford I took courses in renewable energy technologies, economics, optics, and completed two fourth-year research projects. The first project involved modeling solar power concentrators using cubic splines and genetic algorithms. Different shapes were generated and tested by the computer to see which was the most efficient, or which shape directed the most light onto the solar cell. Dr. McCulloch, a professor at Christ Church College, and I have recently applied for a patent related to this project. Oxford was also a wonderful social experience. I felt like a true English student, attending debates at the Student Union and watching crew races. I also traveled to several countries during Easter vacation. The highlight of the trip was camping on the Amalfi coast near Capri. The most moving experience came when I went to Auschwitz and Birkenau in Poland.

Studying abroad has really helped me determine what I want to do with my life. Before I studied abroad in England I was seriously contemplating going to law school. I had already prepared and taken the LSAT and was looking into law schools. I was changing career fields because I did not believe that I could work on engineering projects that interested me. Working on a solar power project rekindled my interest in engineering and also gave valuable research experience.

Much of my success can be linked to my study abroad experience. The Gilman Scholarship granted me the opportunity to explore these options and ultimately make me much, much more competitive for graduate school. I do not believe that I would have received a fellowship to attend graduate school at Stanford without my study abroad experience at Oxford. In addition I was awarded a Seydel/Fulbright fellowship to study in Switzerland at L'Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne under Dr. Michael Graetzel.