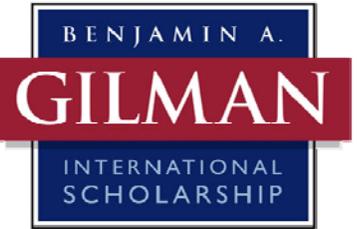


APRIL GILLENS, IRELAND, 2008

North Carolina A&T State University
North Carolina



I studied abroad at the University of Limerick in Limerick, Ireland. My experience abroad inspired me to expand my horizon and subsequently I traveled to Ghana, Malaysia, and Singapore within the four years of my undergraduate education at North Carolina A&T State University.

As an engineering student I feared study abroad would deter me from graduating on time; however, while abroad I was able to take courses specific to my undergraduate curriculum, which allowed me to remain on schedule for graduation. The most challenging aspect of my study

abroad was being the only African-American in an exchange program of nearly 400 students. I combated this challenge by developing an open mind and

being respectful of the various cultures around me.

My study abroad experience has afforded me the opportunity to better understand my career choice in Nuclear Forensics. In this field I have worked with people across diverse backgrounds and the experience I have gained abroad has aided my ability to understand and adapt to different cultures.

I am currently obtaining a Doctorate of Philosophy in Environmental Engineering at Clemson University. Although my graduate studies are demanding I still aim to find time to

incorporate international travel into my schedule through conferences. My experience abroad has also influenced me to apply for international job opportunities. My career goal is to become a scientist in the rapidly growing and

“My study abroad experience has afforded me the opportunity to better understand my career choice in Nuclear Forensics.”

diverse field of nuclear forensics. Study abroad is a remarkable experience that should be afforded to every college student. The Gilman International Scholarship has afforded me the opportunity to study abroad and it has made a lasting impact on my life.

FOLLOW-ON SERVICE PROJECT

I geared my Follow-on Service Project towards encouraging minority students to study abroad. I presented on my study abroad experience to approximately 80 graduating seniors at my former high school, which is predominantly composed of African-Americans. I also took a before-and-after poll to determine

if my presentation compelled students to study abroad. Most of the students were willing to study abroad; however, there were a few students with outstanding obligations which would make study abroad or even attending college very difficult. As an African-American, I have found it initially challenging to embark

upon a study abroad experience due to the lack of international travel among my family members and the fear of displacing myself from my culture. Through study abroad, however, I realized I can understand more about my own culture while exploring others.