

Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship

Sample Essay Outline

Please be advised that the below is only a suggested outline - there are many different ways to write a competitive scholarship essay, and on the flip side, following this outline does not guarantee that your essay will be competitive. We still hope this outline provides a helpful structure or starting point.

The Statement of Purpose Essay (7,000 characters)

1. Introductory Paragraph

- a. *Grab the readers' attention! Let your personality shine through.*
- b. You can include dialogue, quotes, and anecdotes to spice up your writing.
- c. Remember that you're telling a story. Reviewers are reading 60-90+ essays at a time, so you want to stand out.

2. Who are you, and what are your personal/professional/academic goals?

- a. *The Gilman prioritizes applicants with a diversity of values, beliefs, and backgrounds. Explain to the readers why you are unique!*

3. What is your program, and where are you going? What will you be doing while abroad?

- a. You should list particular courses or activities, if they tie closely with your goals.
- b. Demonstrate that you've done your research on your host city/country - cite facts.
- c. Don't assume that the readers know *anything* about your host country or program.
- d. Stress the academic and cultural significance of your activities.

4. How do your program and destination connect with your aforementioned goals?

- a. *Why should YOU be chosen for this scholarship - what will you DO with the skills and knowledge you gain?*
- b. Avoid emphasizing a lack of funding; all students who apply for the Gilman Scholarship have a demonstrated financial need, so the readers want to know other ways that you stand out.
 - i. If you have overcome specific hardships that you would like to share, you can certainly still include those details here if they fit within your broader narrative.

5. What challenges do you anticipate, and what experiences or skills do you have to overcome them?

- a. List at least two challenges. Examples include (but are not limited to): culture shock, language barriers, burnout, homesickness, challenging academic coursework, being immersed in a culture with very few citizens of your background, etc.

6. Wrap It All Up

- a. Summarize in one paragraph what you shared above. In no more than 3-5 sentences, you'll want to reiterate:
 - i. Why this *particular* program and destination are *uniquely* tied to your goals.
 - ii. How you will be successful abroad.
 - iii. What you will do with the knowledge and skills you gain from studying abroad. *Don't just tell the readers that this will change your life - explain HOW*

The Building Mutual Understanding Essay (3,000 characters)

1. **What does it mean to *you* to be an American and a “citizen diplomat”?**
 - a. *Unlike the Statement of Purpose, you don't need a fancy introduction for these two shorter essays. Jump right in!*
 - b. You don't *need* to mention an awareness of American stereotypes, but thinking of these might help you brainstorm for this essay. Consider: what perceptions might citizens of your host country have of Americans, and likewise, what stereotypes might exist about *their* culture? Show a self-awareness of cultural bias.
 - c. We recommend explicitly using the phrase “citizen diplomat” at least once in this essay.
2. **How will you represent the United States while abroad, and how will you contribute to mutual understanding?**
 - a. To brainstorm, think of five adjectives that describe how you will positively represent the United States in your host culture. Now, consider what you will do to demonstrate those qualities. What cultural obstacles might you face, and how will you respond?
3. **How will you look for the opportunities to build relationships and engage meaningfully with your host culture?**
 - a. *Be very specific here!*
 - b. Don't just mention a general open-mindedness: what will you go out of your way to do in order to engage with others on a deeper level? Ideas include (but are not limited to): joining a local sports team or club at your host university, organizing a potluck, seeking out a local “buddy” for mutual culture exchange, visiting small businesses or local festivals/events, etc.

The Follow-On Service Project Proposal (3,000 characters)

1. **What is your project idea?**
 - a. *Talk to EA if you need help brainstorming!*
 - b. Select a particular target audience. Targeting all UNC Charlotte students is too broad.
 - i. How can you use your current network?
 - ii. You can also go beyond campus, as long as there are soon-to-be students!
 - c. Keep in mind that *most* students describe being a Study Abroad Ambassador for their project; you can do this, but we'd suggest doing more in addition to an Ambassadorship. You can always combine being an Ambassador with more specific outreach or action.
 - d. This service project should directly relate to increasing awareness of studying abroad *and* the Gilman Scholarship - mention the Gilman here by name!
 - e. You *cannot* make money for your service project.
2. **Be very detailed about your project plan.**
 - a. Explain what concrete steps you will take to make your plan happen. If you want to create a blog, how will you advertise it - mention specific departmental newsletters or advertising strategies by name!
 - b. Be clear how your own study abroad experience will be incorporated