Increasingly, UCI students are being awarded money to support their study abroad. The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship (Gilman Scholarship) is a national grant program sponsored by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State that awards up to $5,000 to U.S. citizens of limited financial means to help them study abroad.

We are pleased to announce that this year, 47 UCI students received the scholarship, which is a 200% increase over the past 5 years! This is due in large part to increased scholarship promotion and scholarship essay reviews as part of our mission to foster a culture at UCI in which study abroad is expected and achievable for all students. We hosted workshops and held scholarship essay review hours as a means to encourage more students to apply and to help position them to win the scholarship.

What’s most exciting is that each one of these recipients has the opportunity to give back by completing a Follow-on Service Project upon return to their home campus, thereby educating others about the opportunity to receive this scholarship. For example, Clair Mansour, a Biology major whose story is featured on page 3, credits receiving the Gilman Scholarship for allowing her to study abroad not only once, but twice! Upon her return from study abroad, she completed her follow-on project by serving as a Generation Study Abroad Ambassador (GSAA) and has coordinated over 10 presentations, including two large student presentations during UCI’s “German Day” encouraging local Orange County high school students to continue developing their German language fluency by not only taking upper division German language courses...
UCI’s Study Abroad Center Helps Pell-Eligible Students Get the Gilman Scholarship
...continued from page 1

at university, but participating in immersion programs abroad. Shayon Falls, another GSAA and Gilman Scholarship recipient, returned from Brazil eager to share his experience and even conducted a study abroad presentation in sign language to an American Sign Language class. Jenny Vuong, who studied abroad in South Korea developed an interest in refugee research and has recently applied to study abroad again in Japan under the assistance of the Gilman scholarship so that she can collect narrative data from survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Jenny intends to present her research findings at the Undergraduate Research (UROP) Symposium next year.

By continuing to encourage and support our students to apply for and win scholarships, the more opportunities they have to achieve great things that set them on a trajectory to both international and domestic success!

Pictured left to right: Clair Mansour in Berlin, Shayon Falls in Brazil, Jenny Vuong cycling in South Korea
I have told my story so often I have pared it down to a few sentences. My name is Clair Mansour and I am the daughter of a widowed immigrant mother from Long Beach, California. I usually emphasize this point more when I try to convince people studying abroad is possible for everyone, because if a low-income STEM student like myself can spend Fall 2015 at the University of Manchester and Spring 2016 at the Free University of Berlin, it proves anyone can.

When setting out on this experience I was amazingly career-oriented. I had blinders on and viewed studying abroad as a resume builder; a way to widen my network and make myself more marketable. I figured I was young, adaptable, and still hadn’t put any roots down so if there was ever a time to see the world, it was now. I was incredibly driven and tenacious and was awarded the Benjamin Gilman Scholarship and UCEAP Promise Award for my efforts.

But this article is not about the steps I took before getting on an 11-hour flight to Europe nor the homesickness, culture shock, or any other clichéd but completely valid trials and tribulations I underwent during my 11 months abroad. This is about the steps I took when I returned.

After completing my year abroad, I did what most students do post-program and I took a few weeks off to travel. Then I committed to a month-long summer internship in Washington D.C. and landed in Southern California just in time for the commencement of Fall Quarter. Between re-adjusting to the U.S., my 8-hour work days, and preparing for school between reconnecting with old friends and celebrating my 21st birthday, there was no time for me to really process and put into words the things I experienced while abroad. I felt different. I placed emphasis on different values - some long standing and some newly acquired. New people held premier spots in my life and I knew if I didn’t take the time to unpack what I had underwent I wouldn’t reap the full benefit of my experiences in a way that could really shape my future endeavors. I also didn’t know where to begin. I made the decision that I needed a guide, and enrolled in the Study Abroad Experiential Learning Seminar.

The seminar provided a space for me to reflect. My professor, Dr. Sharon Salinger, asked pointed questions about my time abroad that forced me to really think. Questions like, “how have you changed?” and “what affected you the most?” I will tell you what I told her during the first week of class:

...story continues on page 4
“Being abroad, I learned that the world is much richer than I had ever realized. One always hears about how the world is being Americanized and native cultures are suffering in their own lands, and that is entirely what I expected to find: America in a different vernacular. But oh how wrong I was— not only are different cultures proudly alive and well, but they are truly different cultures, with their own myths, languages, values, and worldviews. Abroad, I came to realize that there is more than one way to live correctly and lead a fulfilled life, and it doesn’t have to match the image you’ve grown up with.”

My answers led me to realize my goals are different today than they were a year ago; and Dr. Salinger gave me the tools necessary to pursue my new ones.

The seminar’s various well-selected guest speakers brought credibility to the skills I unconsciously gained by simply building a life abroad. Studying abroad is hard: applying, arranging classes, banking, and organizing a living situation, not to mention adjusting to new food, cooking techniques, and an entirely new country and culture that challenges everything you were brought up to do is not easy. It forces you to stretch out of your comfort zone, and that is marketable. Adjusting and adapting to another culture and coming to understand my own culture better through it could be framed for the workplace as ‘openness, ability to work with a diverse staff and customer base, and adaptability’ are things employers want. I learned that even though the foreign language skills I gained through my time in Germany may not be utilized in the work place, I can market the skills I gained while learning a foreign language. For example, learning German in such a short time frame shows my dedication to a project, my concentration and listening ability and my initiative to gain new skills in pursuit of a larger goal. Things I never considered while struggling to navigate a German grocery store, but know now thanks to the seminar.

I would encourage every study abroad returnee to take this seminar, because I assume most are just like myself — busy, chronically stressed, full of intention, aware that they’ve changed, but unable to articulate that change. We want different things but are unsure why, and being back home in a familiar territory makes us question if these changes are lasting and valid, or if it was just the foreign water getting to our heads. At the very least, communicating with other returnees provides a community and gives me confidence to say “we” instead of “I”- I know the feelings of confusion are not unique. The seminar ultimately guided me to legitimize, process, and apply everything I had learned abroad so it’s more than a collection of pretty pictures, and even as the romantic glow falls away, my year abroad remains a consequential chapter in my life. ■
Reflections While Abroad  
By Ramia Amira Johnson, UCEAP Ghana Fall 2016 participant

I have always known that I wanted to return to Africa at some point in my lifetime. As a Black American woman, I am apart of the African Diaspora, and I think that I definitely took that into account when considering my future abroad. After extensive research, I decided to apply to study in Accra, Ghana. Ghana is such a beautiful country! Of course it is highly abundant in its natural resources, from the thick green rainforests of Kumasi, to the breezy, coastal resorts found in places such as Cape Coast and Cape Three Points. Apart from the land, I fell in love with Ghanaian culture before I was even accepted into the program. There is such a rich, traditional history that I became enraptured with, and that lasted with me throughout the duration of my stay. As I applied, I knew that I wanted to learn more about the Ashanti traditions, the language of Twi, and the rich music and art cultures found across the country.

I think what drew me to the “Reflections While Abroad” seminar was that it gave me the ability to have a voice and speak about my time in Ghana, while also being able to hear other student voices from across the world! Most importantly, however, I wanted to be able to give others the experience to see Ghana, and Africa as a whole, in a different light than what is commonly shown in narratives across the world. In this seminar, I felt joy in sharing my experiences as both a Black American and a woman. I was able to explore my intersectionality, and how I am able to explore my place today.

My study abroad experience has been the most eye opening, self-reflecting time of my life. I have found myself being present in all situations that I find myself in. Sometimes, I would be disconnected from social media and Wi-Fi for a couple of days. What began as a nuance to the familiarity of connecting to everyone back home, I began to take pride in being able to connect with myself. As I began to reconnect with myself, I also was able to further my connections with others around me! From speaking with other international students to delving into the life and culture of my new Ghanaian friends, I think that I have learned just how important human connections can be. As students, it is easy to sometimes fixate so hard on classes, work, and volunteering, and that can make the world seem so much smaller than it really is.

...story continues on page 6
Coming back to Irvine, I intend to be successful academically and in my community, but I have recognized the importance of self-care and reflection. I have been taught love by so many communities in Ghana, and that has translated to my interactions back in the U.S.

I was able to read all of my blog posts at the end of my semester in Ghana, as well as comments from fellow students and supervisors who were interested in different subjects I talked about. It gave me the ability to reflect on so many different topics. I think one of the most important has surrounded how my identity has been further shaped in Ghana. I was able to discuss the importance in identity, especially as a Black woman today. While gender played a more prominent role in Ghana, I used my time there to reflect on how Black womanhood is perceived across cultures today. This seminar was amazing because it allowed me to reflect on my position in the world, while also allowing for others to reflect on my experiences and their own as well.

I would absolutely recommend this course to future students! It is so important to be able to reflect on our experiences, especially when being subjected to new cultures and environments. In an age where our generation has the ability to be transparent and share our truths to others, this seminar was a safe haven for me. There were times where I was homesick or trying to adjust, and reading others’ comments and posts helped to create an international community that reached to all parts of the world.

**Photos:** Ramia poses with a friend and a local Kente cloth producer in Ntonso after making her own strip with Adinkra symbols (top right) and with wild elephants while on a safari (bottom left).
#UCIFeatureFriday was started this year by one of our Peer Advisors, Tina Zhao. Her goal was to share our student study abroad stories similarly to Humans of New York. Pictured left is one such story, Danny Macias, an Earth Systems Science major, who studied abroad in New Zealand during the fall of 2016. Here’s his story:

“When I started school at UCI, I had no intention of studying abroad. Thanks to my amazing girlfriend, I took advantage of an opportunity to study in New Zealand at the beginning of my senior year. Studying abroad was the best learning experience of my life. When you are surrounded by people that have different perspectives, you start to understand who you are and what you stand for. The most valuable things you will learn are not taught in a classroom. Study abroad and the world will become your learning space. And never forget: You can see the beauty of the world in the eyes of the people who love you. Thank you, Brittany!”

Over the course of the year we’ve heard some amazing stories, but we aren’t done yet. We want to hear yours!

Follow @uciabroad on Instagram!
You can also share your story and be our next #UCIFeatureFriday on Instagram! Be sure to tag your photos #UCIAbroad
On April 12, 2017 UC Irvine hosted its first ever “Giving Day,” an exciting 24-hour online fundraising campaign that allowed students, alumni, faculty, staff, parents, and community members to donate in support of a specific area of interest on campus. In just one day, UCI’s Study Abroad Center raised $1,900 in study abroad scholarships, and UC Irvine has a whole raised almost $1.5 million dollars. We are very grateful for the generous support of alumni and friends who donated during Giving Day 2016 and beyond:

We are very grateful for the generous support of alumni and friends who donated during 2016-17 during Giving Day and beyond:

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Scholarship Recipient Acknowledgements

Each year UCI students are awarded more than $300,000 dollars in scholarships!

**Friends of Study Abroad** is your contribution to our scholarship efforts. This year we proudly recognize the following recipients:

- **Phong Hoang**, Chemical Engineering, UCEAP Japan, 2017-18 academic year
- **Sydney Leong**, Chinese Studies & Dance, UCEAP Taiwan, 2017-18 academic year
- **Denise Martínez**, Global Cultures & History, UCEAP Mexico, fall 2017
- **Ida Tirimba**, International Studies, UCEAP South Korea, 2017-18 academic year

We are also excited to recognize recipients of the *NEW* UCI Black Lives Matter Abroad Scholarship, UCI School of Engineering and UCI School of Humanities travel scholarships:

**Black Lives Matter Abroad**
- **Ariana Gary**, Literary Journalism, UCEAP UK-England, fall 2017
- **Melea Michael**, Film & Media Studies, UCEAP Italy, fall 2017

**Engineering**
- **Lindsay Barnhart**, Electrical Engineering, UCEAP Germany, summer 2017
- **Dennis Dorfman**, Mechanical Engineering, UCEAP Sweden, fall 2017
- **Isaac Espinosa**, Electrical Engineering, UCEAP Ireland, fall 2017
- **Phong Hoang**, Chemical Engineering, UCEAP Japan, 2017-18 academic year
- **Ngoc Mai**, Mechanical Engineering, UCEAP Sweden, summer + fall 2017
- **Lauren Taggett**, Aerospace Engineering, UCEAP New Zealand, fall 2017

**Humanities**
- **Emily Chen**, Global Cultures, UCEAP Japan, 2017-18 academic year
- **Chloe Holden**, Literary Journalism, UCEAP Spain, fall 2017

Make a difference! Give the world!

Support us in our mission to send 20% of a graduating class abroad by 2020!

Make your gift today at: [http://www.studyabroad.uci.edu/contacts/support.shtml](http://www.studyabroad.uci.edu/contacts/support.shtml)