



United States Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20522
www.state.gov

Dear Colleagues:

During these unprecedented times, I want to thank American higher education for your sustained commitment to the safety of American students and your continued support to preserve valuable study abroad opportunities. Whether you are at a U.S. college or university, a third-party study abroad provider or an association that supports the educational community, your resourceful, flexible, and innovative response to these unique global circumstances has been — and continues to be — remarkable.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted the ability of most Americans to travel overseas and of American students to participate in study abroad programs, it remains essential that American students continue to study the languages and cultures of the world and to engage with their peers in a wide range of countries.

We at the U.S. Department of State remain committed to supporting U.S. colleges and universities and other organizations dedicated to American student mobility. We thank you, as you build or re-build your study abroad capacity and encourage applications from American students for State Department-sponsored exchange programs in anticipation of a strong return to U.S. student mobility in the future. We too are developing new tools and resources, including through virtual formats, to assist our stakeholders during this time and beyond. I would like to share some of the ways that we are providing robust and flexible support for American students and higher education at this time:

Languages.State.Gov

Secretary of State Michael Pompeo recently **announced the launch** of a new website to help support Americans and U.S. institutions to identify federally funded language programs, Languages.State.Gov. Secretary Pompeo has called for more Americans to learn a foreign language, and we are proud to provide the first one-stop resource for U.S. government language programs. We encourage American students and professionals to take the website's quiz and find the language programs that fit their goals. These opportunities include language programs for individuals and opportunities for U.S. institutions to host a language instructor from overseas. To meet our national security challenges, make our diplomacy more effective when dealing with both friends and foes, and bolster our continued economic prosperity, the U.S. government supports language study in Mandarin, Russian, Arabic, Farsi, and more than 100 other languages. The Trump Administration is developing tools to make our nation more secure by developing more fluent foreign language speakers who can help us understand the world better. We want you and your institutions to be a part of this national effort.

We have developed a **social media toolkit** to help your institution spread the word about this new resource. The interactive quiz and search feature will help American individuals and institutions find a U.S. government

language training or study abroad program. This website brings together U.S. government language programs from elementary to graduate school levels to professional programs with plenty of flexibility. As we begin a new academic year, we hope that you will use this resource to build enthusiasm among U.S. students for mastering foreign languages. The website can be used by all American academic institutions, educators parents and students to find additional resources to learn languages.

The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program

We have extended scholarship timelines and added flexibility to our **Gilman Program**, including our **Gilman-McCain Award**, to allow students to use funding for programs starting any time between January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021 (including academic year 2021-2022 programs). Students can also use their Gilman awards for credit-bearing virtual study abroad or international internship programs and we have added new categories of eligible expenses to support limited virtual costs. We have created new easily customizable **social media toolkits** to assist study abroad, fellowship, and other offices in sharing the word about the Gilman Program. And we have added new outreach tools, including our “A. Gilman Podcast” and our weekly live **Gilman Ask Me Anything** (AMA) sessions where applicants, parents, advisors, and others will have the opportunity to hear from alumni and the Gilman team. We have also shifted our popular **Gilman-CLS advisor workshops** to a virtual format and **added shorter sessions** to demystify aspects of the application process for advisors, including how to recruit students and support them during the **application** process. The next Gilman Program application cycle opens in January 2021 and we urge you to share information about this opportunity, including the new flexibilities, with your students..

We also continue to support programming for our over 32,000 Gilman alumni in all-virtual formats. This coming winter, in cooperation with Iowa State University and Indiana University, we will **host two virtual seminars** for alumni on the increasingly critical issue of cyber security. We continue to offer virtual career-enhancing seminars and opportunities to our alumni and launched our **Gilman Scholar Network** to better connect our alumni across the United States – and around the world.

The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program

We pivoted quickly to virtual this spring for our **CLS Program**, launching CLS Virtual Institutes in six languages for summer 2020. Following the success of this effort, we are offering Virtual Institutes this fall for the study of nine other critical languages, as well as an additional institute for the study of Chinese. Participants for these Virtual Institutes were drawn from finalists and alternates for the suspended summer in-person 2020 CLS Program, and we were pleased to offer this opportunity to these previously selected participants. Our experience with these programs will also inform future plans to use virtual programming to complement in-person instruction and to offer critical language training to alumni.

The application for our 2021 CLS Program is now open with an **application** deadline of **November 17, 2020**, and **at this time**, we are planning for a resumption of our overseas programs next summer. In the coming weeks, our CLS team is holding a number of virtual **information sessions** for students and advisors to support the application process. We also added an “**Impact**” section to our website to better illustrate the diverse careers and opportunities of our CLS alumni, and will report findings from our long-term CLS

alumni survey. We're pleased that the CLS Alumni Society, launched last year and led entirely by alumni, is now using virtual platforms to promote career development and continued language learning for our more than 7,000 CLS alumni.

IDEAS Grants and Initiatives to Build Study Abroad Capacity

We recently announced awards to 24 U.S. colleges and universities of **2020 IDEAS Grants** (Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for U.S. Students Grants) under the Capacity Building Program for U.S. Study Abroad. The recipients will use their awards of up to \$35,000 to develop study abroad programming in all world regions in thematic areas important to the U.S. national interest, such as public health and entrepreneurship/innovation, and we will continue to **share their progress** on our website. We anticipate opening another call for applications in late fall 2020.

Our IDEAS Program also provides **opportunities** for faculty, staff, and administrators at U.S. colleges and universities to participate in a series of free capacity building activities to support U.S. study abroad. We have shifted to an all-virtual format for these opportunities and the next IDEAS Incubator Webinar session we will offer is "**The Future of Study Abroad: Risk mitigation in a COVID world**" on October 22.

Our Commitment to Americans Studying Abroad

As Secretary Pompeo said, "American students studying abroad play a key role as citizen ambassadors. They tell the American story and demonstrate American values and ideals to the entire world." When American students study abroad, they support critical U.S. foreign policy goals by building relationships with foreign peers, sharing American culture and values, and developing valuable career skills.

Though we all are working in challenging times, Department of State remains committed to supporting our students in learning languages and expanding study abroad opportunities for American students to gain critical skills to promote our national security and economic prosperity. We are grateful for your continued partnership in our shared mission.

Sincerely,



Caroline C. Casagrande

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Academic Programs

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

U.S. Department of State