



A Mesa Community College study abroad class in France from 2022. (Photo courtesy of Yvonne Schmidt)

NEWS

Mesa Community College study abroad program named third highest producing in nation for government sponsored scholarship

Rey Covarrubias Jr. 11/14/2023

Mesa Community College's study abroad program on Nov. 3 was named one of the top producing students for the Gilman Program scholarship in 2021 to 2022 by The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, highlighting MCC's exceptional efforts as a two year college to help students experience an education beyond the country.

As part of the U.S. State Department, The Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program offers funding for international travel to study or intern abroad for undergraduates who might not otherwise have the opportunity due to financial restraints.

21 MCC students have been awarded Gilman scholarships since 2014, according to an MCC news release.

MCC placed third behind MiraCosta Community College and Portland Community College as the top associate's degree based colleges to have a study abroad program that is eligible for the Gilman scholarship.

MCC's study abroad program remains exceptionally active for students with a scholarship or not, with 110 students traveling abroad for the program last year alone, according to Yvonne Schmidt, MCC's study abroad program analyst.

Schmidt, for over a decade, has taken time to mentor students with the Gilman scholarship application process, which includes three essays that explain in part why the student believes they should be accepted.

"Don't let the process intimidate you because the rewards are well worth it," said Schmidt.

Schmidt told the Mesa Legend the opportunity to study abroad teaches students communication skills, leadership experience, and problem solving abilities as part of their study abroad journey, and the Gilman scholarship is a beneficial way to help students make that option a reality.

"It's like the lottery, if you don't play you can't win, if you spend five hours on doing the Gilman essays and win \$5,000, that's a pretty good return on investment!" Schmidt excitedly said when referring to helping students access the study abroad program.

The Gilman program originally started in 2001 and has provided scholarships to over 41,000 students to travel to more than 155 countries, according to an MCC news release.

Schmidt said the scholarship program brings long term opportunities beyond the immediate monetary award such as access to the “Gilman Scholar Network” platform, and the offer of 12 months of [non competitive eligibility](#) which can make it easier for qualified applicants to use their Gilman scholarship experience as a potential introduction to a government job.

The scholarship has two applications deadline per year, with the next on March 7, 2024 and then October 10, 2024, with awardees announced in mid-May and mid-December, respectively.

Students who want to learn more about the Gilman scholarship can [visit their website](#). MCC’s [study abroad program](#) takes students to countries like Japan, Mexico, Ireland, and Namibia as part of a growing list of travel options, with [many scholarship opportunities](#) outside of the Gilman Program.

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Rey Covarrubias Jr. is a freelance reporter for the Mesa Legend. As a lifelong Arizonan, he has found his passion in learning and sharing the diverse cultural and natural wonders of the state.

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