

New Ambassadors



Jennifer Staton
Sr. Fellowship and Graduate School Advisor
University of Alabama in Huntsville, Alabama

Jennifer Staton is the Senior Fellowship and Graduate School Advisor at the University of Alabama in Huntsville (UAH), where she created and currently manages the university's Fellowship Advising program within the Honors College. In this role, Jennifer guides students through the application processes for major international scholarships, research fellowships, and graduate school, working extensively with faculty and staff on raising awareness of these opportunities. As part-time faculty, Jennifer teaches an Honors course on scholarship preparation and an English course on proposal writing. She is also the Interim Communications Director for the National Association of Fellowship Advisors (NAFA). Jennifer has served as a certifying advisor for Gilman for four and a half years.

Jennifer's career has spanned across disciplines, having originally started out as a proposal writer and manager in the Defense and aerospace industries in Huntsville, AL. She has served in higher education for only four and half years but has always fostered a desire to mentor university students and encourage international study and experiences. As a first-generation university student and a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant alum, Jennifer recognizes the life-changing effects of international connection and education, and especially the mentorship she received from her wonderful professors. The Gilman Scholarship is one of her favorite opportunities for which to advise, not least because it offers international exposure to students who may not initially realize that study abroad is available to them.

Jennifer obtained her Bachelor's degree in History at UAH in 2009. As part of her Fulbright, Jennifer taught at the Grundschule Klein Hehlen in Celle, Germany, which inspired her to return to Europe in 2014 for her Master's degree in Linguistics and English Language Teaching at the University of Leeds. Forever a student (some may say "glutton for punishment"), Jennifer is currently taking foundational courses for admittance into UAH's Applied Psychology doctoral program and now has the dubious honor of being staff, faculty, and a student at her institution.



Tristan Rodenhauser
Senior Program Coordinator
Emory University, Georgia

Tristan Rodenhauser is a Senior Program Coordinator at Emory University, where she works with semester programs and supports department initiatives. Previously, she worked at Georgia State University supporting faculty-led summer programs and campus outreach. She has served as an advocate and panelist for the Gilman Scholarship & the Critical Language Scholarship for five years. She enjoys collaborating with colleagues to increase awareness on campus and empowering students.

Tristan earned her B.A. in Criminal Justice and M.A. in Student Affairs Administration at Appalachian State University. Where she had the opportunity to participate in two faculty led study abroad programs to New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

When not in the office, she enjoys being outside on a run, bike ride or whitewater kayaking.



Melissa Matsubara
Director of Study Abroad and International Exchange Programs
Hawaii Pacific University, Hawaii

Melissa Matsubara is Director of Study Abroad & International Exchange Programs at Hawai'i Pacific University, an MSI on the island of O'ahu. She oversees all education abroad operations and program development, including J1 international exchange students, bi-lateral exchange agreements and faculty-directed programs. Melissa is deeply committed to ensuring greater access to education abroad opportunities for a wider range of historically underrepresented students.

Melissa has served as a selection panelist for the Benjamin Gilman Scholarship Program and the U.S. Department of Defense David Boren Scholarship. She has been the campus representative for both scholarships as well as the U.S. State Department Critical Language Scholarship for over a decade. Melissa is also a reviewer for the Fund for Education Abroad's scholarship and is currently part of the Forum on Education Abroad's FAFSA working group. The Gilman is often times the only reason her students are able to study abroad so Melissa hopes to be a resource for other universities and colleges to increase the number of Gilman applicants on every campus.

Prior to HPU, Melissa served as Study Abroad Advisor at Brandeis University in Massachusetts under the late J. Scott Van Der Meid, and has worked in the field of education abroad in various capacities through Harvard's regional office in Chile, Robert College in Turkey, SIT, EIL and YFU.

Melissa holds an M.A. in Intercultural Relations from Lesley University, and a certificate for Teaching English as a Foreign Language from ACLE in Italy. Melissa also serves on the Board of Directors for AIFS Abroad and well Kanu Hawaii, a non-profit, volunteer-based organization focused on community building to create a Hawai'i that is more environmentally sustainable and economically resilient.



Laura Bush
Academic Coordinator, TRIO Achievement Program
Knox College, Illinois

Laura Bush has served as a college success professional at Knox College since 2010 in the Center for Teaching and Learning and TRIO Achievement Program. Before Knox, Laura worked as the Counselor and Retention Coordinator in TRIO Student Support Services at Carl Sandburg College. In her roles at both institutions, Laura fosters student success and advances equity through advising, peer-to-peer learning, and collaborating across campus to offer underrepresented students opportunities and support in academics, education abroad, career readiness, and financial literacy. As the Academic Coordinator for the TRIO Achievement Program, Laura coordinates academic coaching and support for first-generation and Pell-eligible students and students with documented disabilities and works with the Stellyes Center for Global Studies in support of Gilman applicants and alumni. She conceptualized and taught Knox's College Success Seminar course for credit recovery and academic skill building. and was instrumental in developing Knox's annual first-generation college graduate reception, now in its 10th year.

She's served as a non-certifying advisor and selection panelist for the Gilman International Scholarship and is a licensed professional counselor with an M.A. in Educational and Counseling Psychology from the University of Missouri-Columbia and a B.S. in Liberal Arts with Distinction in Psychology from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. As a certified yoga teacher, Laura's teaching and advising is informed by a focus on mindfulness, community, and wellness.



Nataliya Marchenko
Professor of Economics, International Education Coordinator
Joliet Junior College, Illinois

Dr. Nataliya Marchenko is a Professor of Economics and the International Education Coordinator at Joliet Junior College (JJC). She began her academic career at Sumy State University in Ukraine, her alma mater. International experiences have always been a significant influence in her life, from living in Cuba with her parents as a child to relocating to the United States with her family as a young adult. These personal experiences have profoundly shaped her professional journey.

Dr. Marchenko joined JJC in 2007 and began contributing to the college's efforts to internationalize its curriculum in 2012. She has since led study abroad programs in Japan and served as a selection panelist for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program. In 2019, she was appointed as the International Education Coordinator, overseeing all aspects of international education at JJC. In this role, she continues to lead the Japan study abroad program, serves as an academic advisor and Gilman certifying advisor, and assists students throughout the application process.

Additionally, Dr. Marchenko is an executive board member and coordinator of the study abroad program in Seville, Spain, at the Illinois Consortium for International Studies and Programs (ICISP). Her goal is to expand access to international experiences for community college students, who stand to benefit the most from such opportunities.



Calie Dickey
Associate Director for Study Abroad
Butler University, Indiana

Butler University Associate Director for Study Abroad Calie Dickey started working in international education in 2015 after completing her Bachelor's in Public Relations (minors in German and Gender Studies), a year-long co-op in a German university's international office, and a Global MBA. She was a first-generation college student that is passionate about connecting her students with opportunities on campus and abroad to support their academic, personal, and professional development.

Calie has always been interested in life-changing international experiences and enjoys advising students on the hundreds of different options in which they can take part at Butler University. In addition to advising students, she manages all things Terra Dotta, Butler's bi-lateral exchange portfolio, pre-departure and re-entry programming, and study abroad scholarship and visa advising.



Kathryn King
Education Abroad Advisor
Berea College, Kentucky

Kathryn grew up in Kentucky and is delighted to serve as the sole Education Abroad Advisor for Berea College. Berea is a unique tuition-free institution that serves low-income students and functions as a work college. It was the first integrated, co-educational college in the South.

Kathryn oversees all education abroad initiatives at Berea and serves as a certifying Gilman advisor in addition to serving as a Fulbright FPA and CLS advisor. Additionally, she coordinates the national Watson Fellowship nomination process for Berea students each year.

She began her career in international education working as an English Language Assistant in French elementary school classrooms during a year abroad in Lyon, France. Kathryn also spent nine years working for Georgetown's campus in Doha, Qatar. Upon her return to Kentucky in 2014, she worked for both Bluegrass Community & Technical College and the University of Kentucky before joining Berea in late 2021.

Kathryn holds an M.Phil from Trinity College, University of Dublin and a B.S. from Georgetown University.



Emily Sallee
Assistant Director, Office of Nationally Competitive Awards
University of Kentucky, Kentucky

Emily Sallee is the Assistant Director of Nationally Competitive Awards at the University of Kentucky, where she recruits and advises students applying for competitive fellowships. She has served as a Gilman advisor and selection panelist since 2019.

Emily has a Master of Science in Higher Education from UK and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from Western Kentucky University. She began her career in higher education as an undergraduate student at WKU, working as a peer advisor at the university's academic advising center. She has been at UK since 2007.

Emily has also served as a selection panelist for the Critical Language Scholarship and is a member of the National Association of Fellowships Advisors.



Marko Schubert
Assistant Director Study Abroad
Central Michigan University, Michigan

After completing his MA in Transnational and Comparative History, Marko taught courses in the US and Germany and joined the International Education field in 2015 as a study abroad advisor. He is currently in the role of Assistant Director Study Abroad at Central Michigan University. His main responsibilities include study abroad advising, program development, and enrollment services. Marko has worked with the Gilman Scholarship since 2015.



Sarah Akiwumi
Assistant Director of Global Programs & Student Advising
Bennett College, North Carolina

Ms. Akiwumi has been in the field of Global Education for 6 years and serves as the Assistant Director of Global Programs and Student Advising at Bennett College, which is one of only 2 All-Women's HBCUs in the U.S. She believes that higher education and its opportunities should be accessible to all students. This made it a joy for her to promote and work with students to complete the Gilman Scholarship, which she has been doing since 2019. The Gilman Scholarship has been a great resource for her students and has made it possible for many to study abroad. Since her time at Bennett, 16 students have been awarded the Gilman Scholarship, but before that Bennett College has had Gilman recipients since 2005. The commitment of Bennett students to apply for the

Gilman Scholarship is apparent. Sarah has seen how the Gilman Scholarship Staff has offered prompt support to her students through a process that can be scary. It has been a blessing to have Bennett Gilman Alumna come back and share their study abroad stories with their Bennett sisters.

Sarah has developed and spoken at workshops, seminars, and programs such as the 2022 Diversity Abroad Conference and the Scholarship Essay Writing Workshop for students at Bennett. This summer Ms. Akiwumi was selected as the Bennett College staff representative to Costa Rica for the IDEAS Grant, where she studied abroad with CIEE's environmental sustainability program, which has aided in developing program ideas for future journeys abroad. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies and a Global Perspectives Certificate from NC State University in Raleigh, North Carolina and she is grateful to God for the opportunities to work in these roles.



Brandee Norwood
Assistant Director of Financial Aid
Davidson College, North Carolina

Brandee Norwood is an Assistant Director of Financial Aid at Davidson College. In her role, she serves as Program Administrator for the Study Abroad and Outside Resources programs, along with managing the NC State Grant program. She is a member of NASFAA and NCAASFAA with almost 15 years of experience in higher education, primarily in Financial Aid. For the past five years she has served as a Gilman Scholarship Advisor, helping students navigate the scholarship process and securing funds for their abroad experience. Her goal is to support and educate students on financial resources so that they can concentrate on their abroad experience without financial interruptions.

Brandee earned her bachelor's degree in English from Pfeiffer University with a focus on American and African American Literature.



Nicole Flores
Study Abroad Advisor
CUNY Lehman College, New York

Nicole Flores is a Study Abroad Advisor for the Office of International Programs and Community Engagement at Lehman College, a Hispanic-Serving Institution and part of the City University of New York. A Gilman Scholar herself, she studied abroad in Singapore and graduated summa cum laude from Lehman with a Bachelor's in Honors English and Honors Philosophy.

As an advisor, Nicole assists over a hundred students per year and has pioneered an internship program for returning study abroad students, allowing them to gain valuable work skills and capitalize on their newfound international experience by promoting study abroad opportunities and working with exchange students. Dedicated to helping underserved student communities, particularly first-generation college students like herself, Nicole takes pride in her role in contributing to the growing legacy of Gilman Scholars at Lehman College.

With her firsthand experience and passion for international education, she actively supports and mentors students throughout the application process, ensuring that the transformative experience of studying abroad is accessible to all, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds. Nicole has served on Gilman selection panels several times and is committed to expanding the program's reach nationwide.



Anize Appel
Executive Director of Global Education and Associate Dean of Study Abroad
Moravian University, Pennsylvania

Dr. Anize Appel, Senior International Officer (PDSO and RO), currently serves as the Executive Director for the Center for Global Education and Associate Dean for Study Abroad at Moravian University. As a first-generation Afro-Latina with over 19 years of experience in the international education field, having served as a Gilman Certifying Advisor since 2015 and Gilman and Critical Language scholarship selection panelist over the years, Dr. Appel is passionate about connecting people and fostering meaningful relationships.

In her current role, Dr. Appel develops and implements the global strategic vision while cultivating a broader understanding of the transformative value of international experiences for students, faculty, and staff on Moravian's campus and through partnerships around the globe. She is committed to assisting students, faculty, and other Gilman Scholarship Advisors learn how to maximize opportunities through the Gilman Scholarship Program. Dr. Appel is known for her authentic, practical advice through key takeaways that are not only easy to understand but simple to implement quickly. She is an avid supporter of finding novel approaches to solve and remove barriers for Gilman Scholarship applicants and Gilman Scholarship Advisors.

Dr. Appel has served and continues to serve the local, regional, and international community within a variety of professional, academic, and philanthropic organizations through publications, presentations, and leadership as President, Vice President, Chairman on the board, mentor, board member, and committee member in organizations such as the Comparative International Education Society, Phi Beta Delta International Honor Society, NAFSA, NACU, and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. to name a few.

She earned her Bachelor of Arts from Fordham University in Natural Science, a Master of Education from Cedar Crest College, a Doctor of Education from Drexel University, and an MBA from Moravian University.

Her research interests include International Educational Trends, Supportive Processes Associated with Effective International Education, and the processes involved in the development of teacher and student resilience in climates situated in chronic crises. She is always delighted to assist and support experiences that will enrich lives, improve diplomacy, deepen intercultural interconnectedness, and most of all recognizing the humanity of us all.



Kaitlin Palmer
International Affairs Coordinator
Black Hills State University, South Dakota

Kaitlin Palmer grew up in the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota, fostering a deep love for the outdoors and adventure. Her first international experience took her to Florence, Italy, during her undergraduate studies, where she spent a memorable semester in 2013 exploring the Tuscan hillsides by bicycle. She graduated in 2014 as a University Honors Scholar with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Black Hills State University (BHSU) and earned a Masters of Education in Administration of Student Affairs from South Dakota State University in 2019.

Since 2015, Kaitlin has been dedicated to serving students, inspired by transformative high-impact practices—such as internships, study abroad, and research—that shaped her own educational journey. As the Coordinator of the International Relations and Global Engagement Office at BHSU, she operates as a one-person international office, managing international enrollment, student support services, and study abroad programming. She firmly believes that living, learning, and working overseas fosters holistic growth and cultivates a more connected and compassionate world. Kaitlin finds joy in connecting students with life-changing opportunities and empowering them to become future global leaders. She particularly enjoys her work with the Gilman Program to help bridge funding gaps for underrepresented students wishing to study abroad.

In her free time, Kaitlin loves cooking, baking, camping, hunting, biking, and traveling—having visited 20 countries and eager to explore more!



Whitney Longnecker
Director of Study Abroad
Texas Tech University, Texas

Whitney Longnecker is the Director of Study Abroad at Texas Tech University (TTU) where she leads all aspects of TTU Study Abroad including student and faculty leader support before, during and after a study abroad experience including risk mitigation and emergency response. Whitney is passionate about creating access to international experiences and under her leadership, TTU was named a 2017-2018 Gilman Greatest Growth Institution. In addition, TTU was recently named an American Passport Project Institution as well as a leading institution in the U.S. by study abroad participation, both by the Institute of International Education.

Whitney's personal study abroad experiences in the United Kingdom, China, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago ignited her passion for study abroad and have led to her nearly 15-year career in international education. She earned a M.A. in International Education from SIT Graduate Institute. Whitney has experience working with both higher education institutions and third-party program providers including Central College Abroad, the Institute for Shipboard Education | Semester at Sea, and The Pennsylvania State University.



Megan Genrich-Grant
Study Abroad Coordinator
Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Wisconsin

In her role as the Senior International Officer Megan Grant has represented Northeast Wisconsin Technical College (NWTC) nationally and internationally for the past 10 years. One of her main priorities is to develop and maintain strategic partnerships with higher education institutions to advance comprehensive internationalization at the college. She supports NWTC faculty within the Academic Affairs Department to develop international educational opportunities including study abroad, virtual exchange, global professional development, and internationalization of curriculum. Megan has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Master of Science in Education with a focus on Higher Education which has prepared her well for a career in the field of International Education.

Over the years NWTC has received several competitive grants including a study abroad capacity building grant, a MET Life Innovation grant, Tunisian Community College Scholarship Program (TCCSP) grant,



Community College Initiative (CCI) grant, the Year of Exchange in America for Russians (YEAR) grant, and an Innovation Fund grant from Partners of the Americas. As a Senior International Officer on the board for Community College for International Development (CCID) she has developed a strong network of international education colleagues over the past decade. She is an active member of many global education organizations including: Forum on Education Abroad, NAFSA: Association of International Educators, Wisconsin Association of International Educators (WAIE), Illinois Consortium of International Services and Programs-(ICISP), and Institute of International Education (IIE).