



Fall 10-6-2016

## Scholarship Fund Supports Students' Study Abroad

University Communications  
*Illinois Wesleyan University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news>

---

### **Recommended Citation**

University Communications, "Scholarship Fund Supports Students' Study Abroad" (2016).  
*News and Events*. 2944.  
<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/news/2944>

This Article is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@iwu.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@iwu.edu).

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.



# Scholarship Fund Supports Students' Study Abroad

Oct. 6, 2016

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— When she was selecting a college, Lucy Sanchez '17 vowed she would [study abroad](#), but only if she could do so without creating a financial burden on her family. Thanks to Illinois Wesleyan University's [Betty Ritchie-Birrer Endowed Study Abroad Fund](#), Sanchez could fulfill her dream of studying art outside of the United States.

"I wanted to make my parents' sacrifices worth it and take advantage of the opportunities I've been given because of their hard work," said Sanchez, the first in her family to go to college. "The [IWU Study Abroad Scholarship](#) helped so much. It would have been harder and a heavier burden on my family if I didn't have it."

The competitive, need-based study abroad scholarship ranges from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Ritchie-Birrer, a 1947 graduate of Illinois Wesleyan, established the endowed study abroad fund because she valued the opportunities she had to travel to other countries.

Since its creation, the IWU Study Abroad Scholarship has been awarded to nearly 30 students. Each student who receives the study abroad scholarship agrees to document and share his or her experiences. Nick Cocorikis '17 created a [Facebook album](#) chronicling his semester in Japan. [Business administration](#) major Emily Diehl '17 shared her experiences in a May Term travel course through an Instagram account entitled "Emily in Italy." Sanchez, an [art](#) and business administration double major, chose to document her semester in Ireland by creating original works informed by her experiences in the Emerald Isle.



Lucy Sanchez '17 said this self-portrait "deals with finding my place in Ireland, a very different culture than what I was used to, coming from a Mexican-American household."

experience taught her the importance of adapting to and managing change. The travel bug also bit her hard.

"I'm more ready to explore," she said. "The experience opened up opportunities I hadn't considered before going to Italy. I'm also more confident in my abilities." [Research](#) indicates that study abroad benefits students in many ways, including building self-confidence and broadening worldviews.

Study abroad is a requirement for [international business](#) majors like Cocorikis, who chose Japan because of his admiration for Japanese business practices.

"They are some of the best in the world," Cocorikis said. "Studying in Japan could only help my prospects of eventually obtaining a job with one of those companies."

Cocorikis said his semester in Japan was the most formative experience of his life. "It was also the hardest thing I've ever done, but knowing I succeeded and grew from the experience makes it rewarding," he said.

"Without the Betty Ritchie-Birrer Endowed Study Abroad scholarship, it would not have been possible for me to study in Japan," he added.

Nearly half (48 percent) of Illinois Wesleyan students [study abroad](#), and Illinois Wesleyan students are encouraged to strongly consider the opportunity. Illinois Wesleyan's study abroad tuition policy allows students to apply their IWU scholarship and need-based assistance toward the cost of studying abroad for a semester.



Kerry Zhang '17 at UNESCO World Heritage Site, Stonehenge, in England.

"As an artist, I developed my style more fully, and interestingly, I explored my Mexican heritage more," Sanchez said. Living in the County Clare village of Ballyvaughn, population less than 300, Sanchez said the tiny hamlet helped her focus on her art. "I could isolate myself completely in this creative bubble," she said.

"My work became larger and more detailed, and it came to mean something to me. Before, I tried to find something to say in my art. In Ireland, the art itself became the message."

Unlike Sanchez, who vowed to make study abroad a central goal of her college experience, Diehl had not considered a learning experience away from the Illinois Wesleyan campus. But when a sorority sister returned from a semester in Seville, Spain, Diehl began exploring her options, and the May Term travel course "Renaissance Italy" ticked every box on her list.

Diehl said the



Emily Diehl '17 posted a collage of her first day in Italy, which included visits to the Colosseum, Arch of Constantine and the Pantheon.