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Four Students Awarded Gilman Scholarships for Study Abroad

Dec. 19, 2017

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— The U.S. Department of State's Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program has awarded [study abroad](#) scholarships to four Illinois Wesleyan University students: Veronica Torres Luna '19 (Chicago), Monica Munoz '19 (Chicago), Elia Nava '20 (Chicago) and Tamara Snevely '20 (Joliet, Illinois).

Luna, a [political science](#) major and [psychology](#) minor, who will receive \$3,000 to study in Chile through the School for International Training (SIT), said the scholarship makes it possible for her to study abroad. Luna said with the help of the Gilman scholarship combined with financial aid from SIT, she will not have to pay anything out of pocket.

"When I realized I was awarded the prestigious scholarship I was so thankful and humbled," Luna said.

As part of the program "Cultural Identity, Social Justice, and Community Development," Luna will take a variety of courses that will allow her to gain hands-on experience on all three topics. She will also complete an internship during the last four weeks of the program.

While in Chile, Luna said she is most excited to live with indigenous communities as well as her homestay family. She hopes to learn more about the Chilean culture, history and everyday life, and share her own culture.

"My first language is Spanish and I am Mexican, so I am eager to share my culture, traditions, and my version of Spanish with my Chilean family and the many friends that I'm sure I will make," Luna said.

Munoz, a [financial services](#) and [Hispanic studies](#) double major, will receive \$3,500 to spend a semester in Ecuador through IES Abroad. During her time abroad, Munoz will be enrolled in four Spanish courses, two of which will be taught at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito. She will also be involved in community service with a nonprofit organization while taking a Service Learning Seminar.

Munoz said while in Ecuador, she plans on visiting the equator line, the Peguche waterfall, the Galapagos islands, and exploring different restaurants and locations in Quito.



This photo was taken on a previous study abroad trip to Barcelona, Spain, which is where two of the four Gilman Scholarship recipients will be studying.

"As a Latina, I love to explore different Latin American cultures, and I am very excited to submerge myself into the Ecuadorian culture," Munoz said. "I hope that I can come back to Illinois Wesleyan with a greater vision of the world, a diversified view of my thoughts and values, and a greater respect and appreciation for other cultures abroad and especially here in the U.S."

Nursing majors Nava and Snevely will receive \$4,500 to study in Barcelona, Spain through the IWU Spain program.

"I was so happy when I received the Gilman scholarship. I was also surprised because it is an international scholarship, and it is very competitive," Nava said.

Snevely said the IWU Spain Program is one of the only programs that allows nursing students to study abroad and stay on track for graduation. As part of the program, Nava and Snevely will take a variety of courses including two nursing courses, a Spanish course, and a director's course on drug abuse taught by Victoria Folse, The Caroline F. Rupert Endowed Chair of Nursing and Director of the School of Nursing.

"My initial thoughts turned into actions when I received my acceptance. I cried almost immediately after reading the email," Snevely said. "I have always stood out because I did not have the finances to do many things, so I was always left behind. This scholarship will make me stand out for being able to do something for once."

While in Spain, Nava and Snevely said they plan on immersing themselves in the Spanish culture and lifestyle. Nava said she is most excited to live with her Spanish host family, and Snevely – a self-proclaimed "foodie" – is excited to try all of the local cuisine.

The four Gilman scholarships mark the most earned by Illinois Wesleyan since 2014. This is also the first time that every IWU student who applied for a scholarship was awarded one.

"I think the Benjamin Gilman scholarship is one of the greatest resources out there to help students with financial need to spend a semester abroad," said Stacey Shimizu, Director of the International Office. "It allows students to more clearly imagine themselves abroad and relieves them of what can be a heavy anxiety."

Gilman scholarships are awarded to U.S. undergraduates, including students from diverse backgrounds and students going to non-traditional study abroad destinations, with financial need. The program was established under the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000. Nearly 1,000 American undergraduate students from 386 colleges and universities across the U.S. received awards to study or intern abroad during the 2017-18 academic year.

For additional information on applying for next year's scholarship, please visit the Gilman Scholarship [website](#) or contact the International Office at (309) 556-2770.

By Vi Kakares '20