

IFSA-Butler First Generation Scholarship Essay

Ever since my freshman year of high school, I have relished the prospect of studying abroad. I can remember the exhilaration that I felt when taking my first trip outside of the United States—a one-week vacation to visit family stationed at the U.S. military base in Heidelberg, Germany. My uncle, a Neapolitan who immigrated to America after meeting my aunt in Heidelberg, encouraged me from my youth to broaden my exposure to foreign cultures and learn as many languages as possible. Ever since, developing the skills necessary to thrive in our increasingly interconnected world has been one of my top priorities: I began learning French, Spanish, and Italian in high school and traveled abroad as often as grants were available. My decision to study abroad, then, was an easy one.

As a first-generation college student, however, the journey to higher learning has been arduous to say the least. My father, a retired carpenter, left high school at the age of 15 to pursue a job at a local lumber mill in order to support his family, and my mother, a daycare provider, was not allowed to go to college because my grandfather believed that women were better-suited to stay at home than pursue higher education. Over the course of my childhood, because of financial instabilities and my father's bouts with alcoholism, I discovered the necessity of self-sufficiency and adaptability. While both of my parents have been nothing but supportive in my decision to study at Harvard and spend a semester abroad at Oxford, I learned at a young age that in order to realize my dreams I would have to take the initiative myself.

I am diligent, hardworking and academically-minded: when presented with a challenge, I am always eager to rise to the occasion. While in high school, I began my own charity for the American Cancer Society to collect donations in support of the organization's research. I was ultimately able to raise, by baking and selling cookies across the state of Maryland, over \$50,000 for the ACS while still maintaining a perfect GPA in school. At Harvard, I have likewise strived to balance high academic achievement with strong involvement in the community: by writing for *The Harvard Crimson*, producing local theatre, fundraising for the Harvard Cancer Society, and working for the Institute of Politics, I have developed the skill set necessary to prosper both in and outside of the classroom.

I know that, given this incredible opportunity, I will grow both personally and academically—with the skills I acquire at Oxford, my future plans will become all the more achievable. After graduating from Harvard, I hope to pursue my passion for British history and literature at graduate school (preferably also in the UK). While my professional plans are considerably less definite, my goal is to ultimately work in academia and inspire undergraduates in their incipient years of higher education to consider study abroad. Using my time at Oxford, I hope to impart on my students the importance—really, the necessity—of an international academic experience in their own academic and personal growth.