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For Immediate Release

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Four Aggies Win Gilman Scholarships to Study Abroad

Four Aggies were among the 600 students from across the nation who received a prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to study abroad. Texas A&M University is amongst the top 20 institutions in the United States for the highest number of Gilman Scholarship recipients in the 2008-2009 school year. In addition to the recent recipients, five Aggies received Gilman Scholarships in the fall of 2008.

Ambassador Eric M. Bost, vice president for Global Initiative and former Ambassador to South Africa, said the numbers of applications and scholarships show a steady increase in the past few years since the first Texas A&M student was awarded a Gilman Scholarship in 2002.

"I am pleased to see a steady increase in the number of applications and the awards received by our students," said Bost. "This is a strong indication of our students' growing interest in gaining international education experiences and the quality of Texas A&M applications in national scholarship competitions. It is one of our goals to have more Texas A&M students need to apply for these prestigious scholarships."

Matthew Ostermeier, Aaron Hughes, Thomas Rodgers, and Mark Richardson were four of the 1,659 students who applied for a Gilman scholarship to study abroad this spring. Students who receive the Gilman Scholarship to study abroad are also eligible to receive an additional \$3,000 Critical Need Language Supplement from the Gilman Program for a total possible award of up to \$8,000.

Matthew Ostermeier, an Environmental Design major plans to use experiences on the Texas A&M Italy Spring Architecture program at the Santa Chiara Study Center to enhance his graduate level portfolio in order to be more competitive for graduate school and job opportunities.

"Without an understanding of different cultures it is hard to appreciate your own culture or to find ways to improve it in different areas," Ostermeier said.

Aaron Hughes, an International Studies major with a focus on International Commerce and Asia will participate in the reciprocal exchange between Texas A&M University and Osaka University. He has many friends from Osaka already who studied at the College Station campus as part of the university's

Reciprocal Exchange program. Aaron looks forward to learning first-hand about his friends culture, improve upon his Japanese skills, and to research employment opportunities in Asia. Hughes said the Gilman Scholarship has given him this invaluable opportunity.

“As a graduate from a small town high school and the first in my family to go to college, I never would have envisioned myself traveling to the other side of the world for any reason.” Hughes said..

Thomas Rodgers, a non-traditional student who served in the U.S. Navy prior to pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in English at A&M, is excited at the prospect of full immersion through direct enrollment at a Chinese university for Chinese language and culture courses. He also has made arrangements to intern as an English as a Second Language (ESL) Teacher with a local company. In addition to earning credit towards graduation, Rodgers will have first-hand experience in the ESL field he plans to go into after graduation from Texas A&M.

Mark Richardson, an Environmental Design major, will spend his spring semester abroad on the Texas A&M Spain Architecture program. It was an opportunity Richardson thought was not possible until he received the scholarship funding.

“Most [Architecture] firms will prefer someone with this kind of knowledge as opposed to someone without,” said Richardson about experiences abroad.

Established by the International Academic Opportunity Act of 2000, the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship has awarded scholarships to 3,102 U.S. undergraduate students. These scholarships have enabled recipients to study worldwide in over 80 different nations including Cameroon, Egypt, Uruguay, Latvia and many more. Past Gilman Scholars have gone on to receive many prestigious awards including Fulbright Scholarships and Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarships to pursue graduate work and research abroad; are working overseas in a variety of capacities; are pursuing graduate study within the U.S. and are working in their chosen professional careers.

The Aggie students who received the Gilman Scholarships demonstrate Texas A&M University’s commitment to diversifying and globalizing the A&M community, as articulated in Vision 2020. Texas A&M University is committed to providing students with enriching international educational experiences that position graduates for successful career options while earning credit towards graduating on time. The Gilman Scholarship is but one example of scholarships that are attainable for Texas A&M students planning to study abroad. More information on this scholarship and other resources for study abroad is available at <http://studyabroad.tamu.edu/>.