



The Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program is a funded summer opportunity for American college and university students to learn languages essential to America's engagement with the world.

A program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the CLS Program is part of a U.S. government effort to increase the number of Americans studying and mastering critical foreign languages and applying those skills in their professional careers. Students spend eight to ten weeks over the summer studying one of a dozen critical languages in classes facilitated by native speakers at a host institution abroad.

Languages: Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Portuguese, Russian, Swahili, Turkish, Urdu

WHY THE CLS PROGRAM?



The CLS Program is more than a typical study abroad program. It is designed to advance language skills while engaging participants in the local culture. From the moment participants arrive, they are immersed in the community and language. With courses led by native speakers, home stays and dorm placements with local students where possible, and weekly conversations with language partners, CLS equips students with the tools to achieve remarkable linguistic and cultural growth.

In just 8-10 weeks, participants gain an average of two sublevels on the ACTFL Proficiency scale widely used by U.S. language programs to measure language ability.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE



- 8-10 weeks of programming
- Minimum of 15 hours of group-based language classes per week
- Small classroom size
- Inclusive support provided by program staff
- Weekly individual consultations with instructors
- Weekly meetings and cultural exchange with language partners
- Hands-on cultural activities like calligraphy and cooking classes featuring local dishes
- Excursions to sites of historic and cultural significance



"The immersion in the host country's culture and language were by far the most effective aspects of the program [...] It allowed us as students to more fully grasp and bridge cultural differences and use and practice the target language. Additionally, the language partner system and small class size allowed for more individualized instruction and attention, helping to greatly improve my language skills." - 2023 CLS Program scholar

ELIGIBILITY



- Must be a U.S. citizen or national
- Must be enrolled in an undergraduate- or graduate-level degree-granting program at a U.S. college or university at the time of application
- Must be at least 18 years old by May of the program year

BENEFITS



- Intensive language instruction at host institutes abroad
- Structured cultural enrichment experiences
- Academic credit issued by Bryn Mawr College
- Language gains certified by the ACTFL OPI test
- Non-competitive eligibility for U.S. federal jobs
- Admission to a diverse network of U.S. Department of State Exchange Alumni

SELECTION

Applicants should articulate how they plan to continue studying their CLS language and how the language will play a role in their future career. Applicants must demonstrate they have the skills to succeed on an intensive overseas group program and explain the unique perspectives they will contribute to the cohort and host community abroad.

The CLS Program welcomes all eligible applications and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Students in all disciplines are encouraged to apply, as well as students pursuing professional or associate degrees and those attending community colleges and technical schools.

Preference may be given to candidates with limited or no previous study abroad experience.

WHY STUDY A CRITICAL LANGUAGE?

Critical languages are languages essential to the United States' national security, economic prosperity, and engagement with the world, and they tend to be less commonly taught in the United States or have relatively few proficient speakers. Critical language skills and inter-cultural competence are in demand in our globalized workforce and increase a student's competitiveness across career fields.

WHO ARE CLS SCHOLARS?

- Over 50% self-identify as students of color
- Over 25% have demonstrated financial need
- Over 25% are STEM majors
- Over 250 colleges and universities represented each year



"For myself and so many of my peers, CLS was an incredible, once in a lifetime immersion opportunity that truly transformed our understanding of cultural competency, intercultural communication, and beautifully complex cultural narratives. The most rewarding part of all was sharing my stories, experiences, and newly acquired knowledge with my friends and family back home." - 2023 CLS Program scholar

