



Department/Division  
School  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Street Address  
City, NJ 00000-0000

Your Name  
Your Title  
xxxx.xxxxxxx@rutgers.edu  
p. 000.000.0000

Month 00, 0000

Scholarship/Fellowship Foundation  
Street Address  
City, State 00000-0000

Dear Screening Committee:

I suspect that *First Name Last Name* always makes the very most of the opportunities presented her because she undertakes nothing without knowing exactly what she is doing and why she is doing it. Her current study abroad in Costa Rica serves as a ready example of the thoughtfulness and preparedness so characteristic of this bright, committed young teacher-activist. Asked why she selected a country with which our university had no previous relationship when other established programs were available to Rutgers students in such Spanish-speaking countries as, say, Spain or Mexico, she is quick to explain that she chose Costa Rica because it is the strongest symbol of national stability and progressive thought in Latin America and the Caribbean and, in any case, she also wanted to challenge herself personally by “going it alone” while living abroad, eschewing the comfort of the company of English-speaking Rutgers classmates and thereby forcing herself to speak Spanish at all times and having to rely on native people for her emotional and social sustenance as well. This same desire for the challenge of complete immersion in everyday life in Costa Rica also explains why she opted to study there for a full academic year rather than the more usual single semester. *First Name*, it seems, does nothing by half-measures. Indeed, at present she is even making full use of her inter-session break from the University of Costa Rica by volunteering in Panama as an unpaid intern at Voices From Our America, an oral history project working to document and preserve the history of Afro-Panamanians of West Indian descent.

Of course having to create a one-woman study-abroad program in a country where there was none previously offers plenty of challenges, not least of which was *First Name's* having to locate on her own the financial support for a year living abroad. That she found her way to the Department of State's Gilman International Scholarship speaks to *First Name's* resourcefulness; that she was successful in winning the Gilman should be attributed to her considerable ability, commitment, and self-confidence. It is exactly this last quality of *First Name's* that *Administrative Colleague*, Director of Rutgers' Study Abroad program, addresses so eloquently and at length in his letter of support. *First Name* is simply someone blessed with the ability to, as *Administrative Colleague* puts it, “make things happen.” To this I would only add my own emphasis on *First Name's* characteristic thoughtfulness in positioning herself to make the very most of her time abroad by taking a heavy course load (21 credits!) in prerequisites and major requirements the spring semester before she left for Costa Rica.

There was at that same time, however, a more pressing personal challenge with which *First Name* also had to cope. In the fall of 2007, just as she was beginning to muster support for the pioneering study-abroad program she had designed for herself, her mother's kidney disease worsened and *First Name* had to stand by helplessly and watch as the woman she loved so

much went in and out of rejection. Finally, the situation became grave, and transplant surgery had to be performed in summer, 2007, not long before *First Name* was to leave for Costa Rica. The operation was a success, but *First Name's* mother, a single parent who worked as a midwife and homeopathic medicine practitioner, had to go on permanent disability. *First Name* was ready to abandon the dream that she had worked so hard and long to realize, but her mother would not hear of her daughter staying home to help her through a difficult period of adjustment. *Mrs. Last Name*, to be sure, has high expectations for her oldest daughter's future and *First Name*, far from home and alone, has done nothing to disappoint her in Costa Rica: With all four of her classes taught in Spanish, *First Name* earned straight As for her first semester studying abroad.

*First Name*, as it turns out, has for some time had to deal with a physical disability of her own. At the age of ten, she was diagnosed with a case of scoliosis so severe that the treatment required was the wearing of an unforgiving shoulder-to-hip back brace eighteen hours a day. *First Name* suffered through this daily routine for almost three years, but as an eighth-grader she decided to take matters into her own hands—not a surprise--and insisted on abandoning the back brace for a self-prescribed daily regimen of swimming at the local public pool. She continues to maintain her health by swimming to this day, and she told me in a recent phone conversation from Panama that she is about to be certified as a scuba diver.

Here at the end I'd be remiss if I didn't at least mention this remarkable young woman's three years of classical voice training as well as her absolute passion for spoken word poetry. *First Name* has even performed at "open mike" nights at New York's famed Bowery Club and Nuyorican Café. Very little seems to intimidate this proud, strong African-American woman of Caribbean descent. Thank you for considering her for a xxxxxxxxxx Scholarship.

Sincerely,

Your Name