Mark and Myra Sorensen International Travel Scholarship

Overview

The Mark and Myra Sorensen International Travel Scholarship is designed to support students who will participate in study, internship, volunteer, or research programs abroad. The scholarship's goal is to fund a diverse array of students, regardless of field of study. The Global Engagement and Education Abroad (GEEA) team at the International Center manages the Sorensen Scholarship.

Awards will be made in the amount of at least $750 to cover expenses such as program fees, transportation, room and board, and/or local excursions made in connection with the project. Scholarship awards are contingent upon the availability of funds.

Application Requirements

Eligibility Criteria
Mark and Myra Sorensen International Travel Scholarship

- U-M Ann Arbor student, regardless of citizenship, enrolled in a degree program
- Must be a rising sophomore or above
- Must be in good academic standing
- Must be returning to campus for at least one semester prior to graduation
- Open to both undergraduate and graduate students
- Duration of international experience should be at least three weeks
- Applicants may be assessed on demonstrated financial need.
- Preference is given to students who will be traveling abroad for the first time.

Application Process for Spring/Summer 2020 Travel
The application will open on March 1, 2020 and will be available on M-Compass.[1]

The online application requirements include:

- Short statement of purpose, no more than 250-500 words, which should include the following:
  - Briefly describe the global experience for which you are seeking funding, including why you chose this opportunity and the goals of your proposed experience
  - How this global experience will benefit you personally, academically, and professionally
  - Previous travel abroad experience
  - How you plan to engage with your host community and will bring your experience back to U-M (or your home community) and share it with others
- A budget sheet for your internship/research/volunteer program
- Proof of acceptance into program: letter (or email) of invitation or acceptance into your program
- Unofficial Transcript

Application Deadline

Application Deadline for Spring/Summer 2020 Travel: April 1, 2020

Scholarship Expectations

- Recipients must comply with the University Travel Policy [2]
- Recipients must meet with an adviser (professional staff or student peer adviser) on the International Center’s Global Engagement and Education Abroad team at least once prior to the start of the project for pre-departure preparation.
- In academic term following their experience abroad, recipients will be required to:
  - Meet with an International Center advisor
  - Write a brief reflective essay about their international experience & the impact it had on them
  - Express gratitude to the Sorensen Scholarship donor through a written thank-you note and attend potential donor/scholar celebration events.

Selection Process

A selection committee will review applications and make decisions to award the scholarship. Applicants may be assessed based on financial need.

Awardees' Reflections

2019
“With the support of the Mark and Myra Sorensen International Travel Scholarship I had the opportunity to travel to Copenhagen, Denmark and study at the Danish Institute for Study Abroad (DIS) for four months. During these four months I took four classes, lived with the most amazing host family, and traveled throughout Europe learning more about myself every step of the way. As a student in LS&A I’ve read about and studied faraway places having always been fascinated by different ways of life and with this study abroad experience I was able to live it, to see first-hand how a Dane gets to work, or what a favorite meal looks like, or how they cross the street. At DIS the professors teach what they do, which meant that my sustainable business strategies teacher was a sustainable business consultant for some of the largest companies in Europe and he gave invaluable insight into his job and what it takes to transform a company’s business model into a sustainable model. In my urban livability class, our teacher marched us out of the classroom onto the city streets and explained the transformation of a car-centric Copenhagen to a people-first Copenhagen, vastly changing how a Dane moves throughout the city. This sort of hands-on teaching brought my sustainable development class to Western Denmark and Norway where we met with environmental game changers, CEO’s, planners, and farmers who are changing the norm and driving the sustainable transition. It was in Denmark where my optimism grew and I realized I’m not alone in this environmental fight. And by far the best part of my study abroad experience was riding my bike home to my host family, to have 2-year old Frida come bounding down the hallway at me when I unlocked the door, the smell of Danish cooking floating through the apartment, and the sight of four other friendly smiles who always asked about my day in a foreign land. Studying abroad ignited two things within me, my passion for travel and my passion to protect our Earth and as I head into my final year at UM I look forward to learning and preparing for my future as a land planner and protector.” – Shawn Farrell, LS&A

“I had an incredible experience in Lima, Peru over the summer thanks to the support of the Mark and Myra Sorensen International Travel Scholarship. For two months, I participated in Emzingo-U’s Global Impact Fellowship, a program which exposes students to consulting with an emphasis on social and environmental impact. I was drawn to this opportunity because of my desire to learn about the field of consulting and engage in meaningful, impact-driven work
in a different country. In a cohort of eighteen students from various universities, we were split into teams and each team consulted for a social enterprise in the Lima region. I was able to work with a company that strives to benefit conservation in Peru by sourcing ingredients for food and cosmetic products from producers in protected regions of the Amazon. My consulting team was able to create a plan for the company to reach more customers and increase sales in a way that coheres with their mission. In many ways, I feel that this experience marked a turning point in my life. I learned so much about consulting, social enterprises, and myself. Living for two months in Lima and being able to explore the culture of this history-rich metropolis but also beyond in Cusco and Machu Picchu was surreal: my Spanish was tested, I was placed outside of my comfort zone at times, and I met some incredible people. With hands-on experience consulting for a small social enterprise now under my belt, I have become more mindful of what businesses, people, and passion can accomplish—this will allow me to apply my degree in a more meaningful and find a career that complements that. I was also able to hone my leadership and communication skills, making me feel confident in my ability to rise to my ambitions and the challenges I will face post-graduation. I now feel more strongly about the importance of international opportunities for students; the perspective and growth mindset I garnered over the summer is something I will continue to kindle for the rest of my life, both personally and professionally." – Bryan Leahy, LS&A, Economics

"With the support of the Mark and Myra Sorensen International Travel Scholarship, I had the opportunity to travel to Phnom Penh, Cambodia, to assist the nonprofit organization, Green Umbrella, with the development of their Waste Management Project and teaching English to grades K-6. As a student interested in helping others, and as a Cambodian myself, I was beyond excited to engage with the diverse community in Cambodia in a meaningful way. After a genocide carried out by the Khmer Rouge left Cambodia’s economy and society in shambles, Green Umbrella has been working in an effort to re-establish the wellbeing of the country by improving the quality of education, particularly for children living in poverty, creating job opportunities for families with disabled members, and encouraging the youth to be future leaders. Every day, for three weeks, I spent most of my time collaborating with Green Umbrella’s Youth Group, which consists of highly motivated high schoolers, on the Waste Management Project. Currently, Cambodia has an enormous problem with
the overaccumulation of waste in public and living spaces because of the absence of a reliable waste disposal system. The Youth Group and I taught students in public schools about the importance of recycling and composting, performed a community needs assessment in eleven villages surrounding Green Umbrella’s headquarters to better understand the problem, and wrote a research paper that was presented to the founder of Green Umbrella. It is hopeful that our findings are spread to and implemented in institutions across Cambodia to give rise to a clean and sustainable country. It was so inspiring to see the passion the students in the Youth Group had for making a difference in the world, as well as their appreciation for learning. I can say with confidence that Cambodia is one of the most beautiful countries I have ever been to. Now, I am determined to bring back my experience to the University of Michigan by encouraging everyone to reduce unnecessary consumption and recognize the problems that exist in their home communities. My involvement with Green Umbrella has not ended, as I am continuously fundraising with GlobeMed—a club on campus focusing on global health equity—to expand the organization’s influence. Although the people I worked with on the trip spoke a different language and grew up in a completely different cultural environment, their sense of compassion and initiative was evident. Overall, this opportunity has not only strengthened my desire to pursue a career in the medical field, it has also allowed me to resonate with my Cambodian roots.“ – Barbara Tan, LS&A, Biology

2018

“With the support of the Mark and Myra Sorensen International Travel Award I had the opportunity to travel to Quito, Ecuador to teach students in subjects such as English, Reading, Math and Science through The Quito Project, a non-profit organization that works to minimize the achievement gap in low income zones by working with local communities and promoting global collaborations through education. I worked with the youngest age group, ages 6-8, while also working collaboratively with the other teachers to ensure the success of each group of
students and to promote their interest in higher education. The program, conducted solely in Spanish, demanded punctuality, flexibility, patience and leadership. I was challenged to think critically about innovative and effective ways to teach my children in order to bridge the gap in their learning. But I think my greatest challenge was making sure they felt comfortable and safe in my class because many of them came from troubled and broken homes. I worked diligently to build relationships with each of my students and can honestly say I’ve never met a group of more genuine and loving kids. Now, back at Michigan I’m part of the Executive Board of The Quito Project, and I spend my time fundraising as the co-director of finance. I reach out to UofM departments, corporate sponsors and to the outside Michigan community. I work alongside my team to coordinate strategies for donation drives and fundraising tables to ensure we can provide all our resources for our students that are part of our summer program. Recently, we were able to raise over $1.5K on Giving Blueday and have been able to secure grants to provide our students with all the resources necessary such as notebooks, pencils, art supplies and science materials. This opportunity was fundamental to my growth and development not only as an aspiring agent of change within the Education field, but to dig deeper into my roots as a young Latina woman navigating through life.” – Kathleen Ortiz-Tenesaca, LS&A

Contact Information and Advising

Students interested in the Sorensen Scholarship should contact the International Center at 734-764-9310 or ic-abroad@umich.edu with questions. Education Abroad advising is available in the International Center by appointment throughout the fall and winter semesters. Walk-in hours are posted on the International Center’s website. Walk-in appointments are first-come, first-served.

Source URL: https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/abroad/sorensen-scholarship

Links
[3] mailto:ic-abroad@umich.edu
[4] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/abroad/swt/services