



## Office of Graduate Fellowships:

### Critical Languages Scholarship

#### The Basics Is Right for You?

#### What is CLS?

- CLS is a competitive scholarship funded by the U.S. Department of State that enables recipients to attend an intensive overseas summer language institute in one of 13 “critical” languages.
- CLS summer institutes and locations are organized for program participants by the CLS program with the goal of offering intensive, fast-paced language instruction in an immersive context paired with co-curricular programming to familiarize participants with the culture in which the language is spoken.

#### Eligibility and Rules

- Limited to U.S. Citizens. Must be a U.S. citizen at the time of application, no exceptions.
- Must be enrolled in a degree program (any level) at the time of application.
- Arabic & Persian require 1 year of prior study by the start date of the summer program.
- Chinese, Japanese, & Russian require 2 years prior study by the summer program start date.
- Azerbaijani, Bangla, Hindi, Indonesian, Korean, Punjabi, Turkish, & Urdu are open to beginners.
- You may apply to only one language per competition cycle.
- You must apply for a language – not a location, which will be assigned.
- Applicant must demonstrate long-term commitment to learning the language and relevance to academic and professional goals.

#### Application Checklist

All materials are submitted via the online application at: <http://www.clscholarship.org/>

- Online application forms.
- Three required essays – see pp. 2-5.
- Two letters of recommendation.
- Language evaluation (for those who have prior study / experience in the target language.)
- Transcripts (undergraduate and graduate.)

#### Timeline

- Early fall: New competition cycle opens.
- Application deadline: Mid-November
- First round notification: January
- Final notification: February / March.

## Is CLS Right for Me?

The CLS program is a wonderful opportunity. But it is not for everyone. This is a highly structured group program with an intensive focus on language study, and “fit” is very important. Is CLS a good fit for you? Consider the following questions:

- Do you know what language you want to study? If not, you are not ready to apply to CLS.
- If you are applying to a language with a pre-requisite (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Persian, Russian) do you have the necessary background? If you’re unsure, discuss it with the fellowship advisor and with a language instructor familiar with CLS.
- Can you make a convincing argument for your commitment to the language? If your target language is offered at Mason, are you in that class? If not, can you find a tutor or sign up for an evening class in the D.C. area? Or, at the very least, engage in dedicated self-study and get involved in cultural activities? Students who do not take advantage of opportunities available to them at home will be viewed with skepticism.
- Can you demonstrate a connection between the language, your current program of study, and your longer-term career goals? This “triangulation” of interests is at the very heart of the CLS application. Making a strong case for these connections will help overcome other potential weaknesses in your application. On the other hand, an applicant who cannot make this case will face an uphill battle, no matter how brilliant.
- How will you continue your language study after you return? Students who cannot demonstrate a serious commitment to mastering the language – and a plan for what comes next – will not be strong contenders.
- Are you the kind of person who will do well in an academically intensive, highly structured, small-group program? CLS programs have a heavy academic workload and move very fast. Many programs involve home stays with non-English speakers, and most require a language pledge (e.g. you promise not speak English even with other Americans). CLS programs also involve mandatory extra-curricular activities, leaving participants with little free time. If you are looking for a traditional study abroad experience or hope to do independent travel / research, this program is unlikely to be a good fit.
- Are you prepared to cope with challenging or restrictive conditions in a developing country? (Examples: No air conditioning, limited Internet access, power or water outages, host families / roommates, limitations on what you can wear, different food, different academic culture, different behavioral norms.)
- Heritage speakers / heritage students are welcome in CLS, but be careful to demonstrate at every step that: (a) your interest in the language goes beyond connecting with your heritage and forms part of your long-term academic and career goals; and (b) you require additional formal training to bring your language skills to a level that is academically and professionally meaningful. Heritage learners often have difficulty assessing their language level – for example, they may be able to speak relatively well, but have poor literacy or grammar skills. CLS programs generally have the flexibility to accommodate candidates like this, so long as they meet the minimum requirements for the language.