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# MCC student Varinia Varela awarded Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship to study abroad

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### **January 30, 2019**

MESA, Ariz. – Jan. 30, 2019 – Mesa Community College student Varinia Varela (Gilbert) is one of 395 American undergraduate students from 152 colleges and universities across the United States selected to receive the prestigious Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship (<https://exchanges.state.gov/us/program/benjamin-gilman-international-scholarship-program>) to study or intern abroad during the summer of 2019.



The congressionally funded Gilman Program broadens the U.S. student population studying and interning abroad by providing scholarships to outstanding undergraduate Pell Grant recipients who, due to financial constraints, might not otherwise study abroad. Since the program's establishment in 2001, over 1,300 U.S. institutions have sent more than 28,000 Gilman scholars, who represent the rich diversity of the United States, to 145 countries around the globe.

Varinia Varela, a Japanese major at MCC, received a Gilman scholarship to participate in the Mesa Community College Japan study abroad program where she will study Cultural Dimension for International Trade and Beginning Japanese Conversation. In addition to living with a local Japanese family for three days, she will also participate in a *Business Start Up Weekend* with Japanese students from the Robert T. Huang Entrepreneurship Center at Kyushu University in Fukuoka, Japan.

"Going to Japan has been a dream of mine ever since I was a child," Varela said. "Receiving this scholarship allows me realize that dream and not have to worry about financial constraints. This is a huge opportunity and I'm so elated to have been chosen to represent not only our school, but our state."

"The Gilman Program aims to make study abroad, and its career advantages, more accessible and inclusive for American students. These diverse American students gain critical skills overseas that expand their career options and ability to make an impact in their home communities," said Heidi Manley, the chief of USA Study Abroad at the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. She notes that the program particularly focuses on supporting first-generation college students; students in the STEM fields; ethnic and racial minority students; students with disabilities; students who are veterans; students attending community colleges and minority serving institutions; and other populations underrepresented in study abroad, as well as broadening the destinations where scholars study or intern.

The Gilman Program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is supported in its implementation by the Institute of International Education (IIE).

The complete list of students who have been selected to receive Gilman Scholarships this term, including students' home state, university and host country, is available on the website: [gilman \(http://www.iie.org/gilman\)](http://www.iie.org/gilman)scholarship.org.

Visit [mesacc.edu/study-abroad \(https://www.mesacc.edu/study-abroad\)](https://www.mesacc.edu/study-abroad) to learn more about the study abroad opportunities at MCC.

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Media contact: Dawn Zimmer, (480) 461-7892, Dawn.Zimmer@mesacc.edu  
(mailto:Dawn.Zimmer@mesacc.edu)

*The **U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs'** (ECA) mission is to build relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States. ECA programs, funding, and other activities encourage the involvement of American and international participants from traditionally underrepresented groups, including women, racial and ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. Artists, educators, athletes, students, youth and rising leaders in the United States and more than 160 countries around the globe participate in academic, cultural, sports, and professional exchanges. For more information about ECA programs, initiatives, and achievements, visit [eca.state.gov](http://eca.state.gov) (<http://eca.state.gov/>).*

*The **Institute of International Education** (<http://www.iie.org/> (<http://www.iie.org/>)) works with policymakers, educators and employers across the globe to prepare students and professionals for the global workforce and equip them to solve the increasingly complex challenges facing our interconnected world. An independent, not-for-profit organization founded in 1919, IIE has a network of 18 offices and affiliates worldwide, and over 1,300 member institutions.*

**Mesa Community College** is nationally recognized for service-learning, career and technical programs, civic engagement and innovative approaches to education. The college serves as a resource for career readiness, transfer education, workforce development and lifelong learning. Host to 30,000 students annually, MCC offers more than 195 degree and certificate programs at its two campuses and additional locations. MCC is an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution with a diverse student body that enriches the learning experience. Award-winning faculty are dedicated to student success, providing the education and training that empowers MCC students to compete locally and globally. MCC, located in the East Valley of Phoenix, Arizona, is one of the 10 colleges that comprise the Maricopa County Community College District. For additional information visit [mesacc.edu](http://mesacc.edu).

*Mesa Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).  
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Contact:  
Dawn Zimmer, Media Relations  
(480) 461-7892