

Five **University of Tennessee at Chattanooga** students will get the opportunity to study overseas after being selected as recipients of the nationally competitive Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship. Rising junior nursing student **Kamila Vargas** (pictured here) will be studying in Alcalá, Spain.



The U.S. Department of State's [Gilman Scholarship Program](#) was created to enable students of limited financial means to study or intern abroad, providing them with skills critical to national security and economic prosperity.

To be eligible for the Gilman Program, applicants must be receiving a Federal Pell Grant during the time of application or provide proof that they will be receiving a Pell Grant during the term of their study abroad program or internship. The Institute of International Education has administered the program since its inception in 2001.

Vargas said landing a Gilman Scholarship to Spain and getting the opportunity to spend two months at the University of Alcalá “worked out on so many levels.”

A graduate of Cocke County High School in Newport, Tennessee, Vargas will be participating in a two-month program taking place from June 3 through July 30. She credited UTC Professor of Spanish José-Luis Gastañaga and Director of Study Abroad Programs Laura Livermore for their assistance.

“I have family that is Hispanic, and Professor Gastañaga knew that I wanted to study abroad,” Vargas recalled. “He was talking about how there was a lot of funding for scholarship programs and then he told me about the Gilman.”

“Laura Livermore then helped me figure out the next steps of what I needed to do and all of that. So they were both super helpful.”

Vargas is a Brock Scholar in the UTC Honors College, majoring in nursing with a minor in Spanish. Being a nursing major, the schedule is rigorous, “and we can't miss a day of clinical without making it up,” she said. “If I wanted to study abroad or do anything like that, it would have to be in the summer.”

She said that traveling to Spain would be particularly beneficial. Both of her parents are bilingual; she's not, “but I'm getting there.”

“In the health care system, every day I see a lot of people that just don't have the translation skills,” Vargas said, “or people who can't communicate. If I was having a baby, I would want someone who can understand me who's delivering my baby.”

“That is what pushed me to want to help people, become bilingual and go to Spain. I was really interested in going to a Spanish-speaking country because of that.”