

## Statement of Purpose

I grew up in a predominantly black area where sports dominated and being a young black woman in my school's STEM program was anything but cool. Academic success was a minuscule accomplishment, especially when the only careers you know of are the ones you see on television. My mother never made it to a four-year university due to raising my sisters and me at a young age alone when my father was deported. So once I began as a first-generation college student, working to pay for school on my own, I was lost. I had to begin thinking about my future from a perspective that did not have financial, intellectual, and minority barriers. I committed to college and began looking into other aspirations. I stumbled upon a course and an internship that introduced me to my passion for helping others. I wish to learn about the people and culture of other countries firsthand. Studying critical thinking in the Bali Culture and Sustainability, nontraditional study abroad program will enable me to extend this passion beyond the United States as my next learning opportunity on my college journey.

I began college as a Mathematics major and like many, had no idea my future career path. Thankfully, my advisor placed me into an Intro to Programming course and I fell in love with it. The complexity of solving problems that, I never knew could, made me feel powerful. I began feeling happy to study which is a little insane, creating a schedule for coursework and was intentional with my future goals. I decided to change my major to Computer Science and it has not been easy. Self-doubt encapsulates me often because I had to learn a lot on my own to achieve academic success while working to support myself. Prioritizing school while working sometimes felt like a losing battle. Fortunately, I have been a President's List recipient since I began college in 2021. This motivated me to apply for internships and seek professional help for my future. I came across a Women's Leadership course at my university and was intrigued. I learned about a wonderful non-profit named the Gates Foundation and the work that they do to assist in poverty, inequity, and disease. I then read "The Moment of Lift" by Melinda Gates a co-founder who visited many poverty-stricken villages and connected with women all around the world. This novel pulls my heartstrings to this day because it was like I was reading what my purpose could be. My academic journey thus far has taught me to adapt and persevere no matter the challenges. I'll utilize this mindset throughout my time in Bali to be a successful scholar abroad.

A highlight for me during the Bali program is the several visits to various nonprofit organizations. One visit will be to the Bali Sari Foundation, which provides free health services to Balinese people who cannot afford treatment and/or live in remote areas where healthcare services are limited or nonexistent. I admire the work of this organization because I received my first internship at a nonprofit that has a similar mission. I freelanced as a data analytics intern for nine months with a state program that assists low-income individuals. I was constantly faced with raw data and heart-wrenching statistical reports. I remember viewing statistics of people without health insurance and it's crippling to think many in Bali do not have access to healthcare at all due to their location. My time with this organization led me to study Sociology as my minor. My experience made my desire to help people ignite and view my purpose as being someone to assist at large altitudes in academia. The unique outlook I have is crucial for critical

thinking studies. I know I will be faced with crippling realizations during our program and I will approach every aspect with open ears and respect.

I study Sociology as my minor, due to who I am as a person and Computer Science as who I am as a scholar, to enable me to be who I want in the world. The intersectionality of technology and society is a huge interest of mine, which also attracted me to this Philosophy critical thinking program. Social science and humanities complement each other due to both seeking to understand human experience and behavior. I view this course as a once and a lifetime opportunity to indulge myself in the culture of Southeastern Asia. The Bali program explores three villages, Ubud, Sanur, and Amed, and will be rich in cultural immersion. The program begins in Ubud a thriving village considered the cultural capital where I'll stay at the Madras Homestay a traditional Balinese housing compound. While staying with the host family I hope to learn about their experiences, and academia, and eat traditional dishes. We will be meeting the Kopernik organization that assists low-income communities with affordable technology, and this will give me the unique opportunity to learn about the quality of life they endure due to their limitations. As a Gen-Z in the United States, I have never experienced technological limitations and I am curious to learn of the technology that is effective in their specific circumstances. This is a huge societal and technological aspect of the program that can be a highlight of the innovations in my future. My studies are unique compared to other usual participants of this type of program and maybe someday I can be of help to this organization. I value the aspects of this study abroad program due to the outcomes being outside the scope of what I could learn in a traditional course. This is a once and a lifetime opportunity for me to bridge my current social science and technology studies with the cultural experience, local context, and people.

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, "Do one thing every day that scares you. Those small things that make us uncomfortable help us build the courage to do the work we do." I'll be taking this advice extremely literally while I indulge in this program. This program does not scare me because of the activities, location, or people. Instead, due to being a minority, I became used to being comfortable not chasing my dreams. I know that the ambition that I have does not stop at a typical college journey, but instead began at the moment I embraced this study abroad program in Asia. Each day I spend in Bali will be a small instance of being uncomfortable that'll help me build courage for my future goals. After college, my Computer Science degree, Sociology minor, and unique experience such as this study abroad program will prepare me to work in social justice. I plan to pursue graduate school to further my research experience in humanities and sociology. A dream of mine is to someday work at the Gates Foundation in research and development assisting with gender inequity and education. I wish to do nothing else with my life but give back to people who do not have my privileges and the Bali Culture and Sustainability program will allow me to curate the unique perspective I'll need for my future.

