

# Spreading the Word

A Guide for CLS Alumni Outreach



**CRITICAL  
LANGUAGE  
SCHOLARSHIP**



The CLS Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and is supported in its implementation by American Councils for International Education.

# Sharing Your Experience

---

We love it when CLS alumni finish the summer happy, healthy, and feeling excited about their language-learning experiences. We also love it when they want to help spread the word about the program!

There are still many qualified students at schools across the U.S. who have not heard of the CLS Program. We rely heavily on CLS information sessions to help get the word out to these students, as well as to the faculty and staff at their institutions who will help to promote the program to new students for years to come.

Alumni presentations help to give CLS a voice all across the country; plus, prospective applicants love to hear stories from and ask questions of program alumni! Hearing about your first-hand experience on the program can be far more impactful for a prospective applicant than reading about the program online or in a brochure, or even hearing about it from program staff. Your stories humanize the program and help students who might not otherwise see themselves as CLS Program scholars picture themselves as they relate to you.

CLS Program staff spend a great deal of time during the fall performing outreach and recruiting applicants for the program. Keep an eye on the CLS website for announcements of CLS information sessions that you can share with your networks in addition to the individual outreach you can do on your own in your communities.



We have put together this short guide to help you represent the CLS Program and are available to answer questions or provide further information about your outreach. Please email us at [clsalumni@americancouncils.org](mailto:clsalumni@americancouncils.org) if you would like to get in touch.

Thank you for your enthusiasm!

## Where to Start

---

Applicants for the CLS Program must be enrolled in a degree-granting program, so most of our outreach happens on college campuses, including community colleges, public and private universities, and minority serving institutions. In addition to spreading the word on your own campus, we recommend reaching out to other schools in your area, especially those that may not have a study abroad or scholarships office to share opportunities like CLS with students, and those that do not have many recent CLS alumni. (You can check the number of alumni by institution on our website by searching for the institution here: <https://clscholarship.org/universities>.)

There are probably several offices on any campus that would be interested in helping you share your experience on the CLS Program, and we recommend that you reach out to them to offer to conduct an information session or attend an upcoming study abroad or scholarships fair—which may be taking place in-person or virtually this fall. It will make your planning much easier, and it will help you reach a bigger audience. If there's someone who told you about the program or helped you with your application, that's a great place to start. If not, try reaching out to some or all of these people:

- **CLS Campus Advisor** (search by institution here: <http://www.clscholarship.org/advisors>)
- Office of **Study Abroad, Education Abroad** or **International Programs**;

- Office of **Scholarships, Fellowships, or Nationally Competitive Awards**;
- Undergraduate **Honors Program**;
- On-campus **Fulbright Program Advisor** (search [here](#) for yours);
- **Language departments** – either by language (e.g. Arabic Department, Russian Department), world region (e.g. East Asian Studies Department, Islamic Studies Department), or under a catch-all term like Department of Modern Languages or Foreign Languages. It is especially helpful to check with these departments if any of the 13 [CLS languages](#) are offered at your school, but you can check with them even if the language offerings do not include CLS languages;
- **Language Lab or Language Learning Center**;
- Office of **Multicultural Affairs**;
- Office of **Diversity and Inclusion**;
- **LGBTQ Resource Center**;
- Campus **Writing Center** or **Tutoring Center**;
- Office of **Fraternity and Sorority Affairs**

People in these offices can help you set a time and organize logistics for a virtual or in-person information session, spread the word, and serve as follow-up contacts for students who are interested in starting an application and want help with it. Don't be afraid to email professors and administrators you don't know personally, or to ask for help from people in departments and offices without a clear connection to CLS. University web sites usually have a faculty and staff directory where you can find contact information.

Remember that the CLS Program aims to attract diverse students from all areas of study, so feel free to email professors with whom you work in any department to ask for help setting up an information session or class visit and tell them about how CLS can benefit the students they work with. Fields like engineering, business, or fine arts may not be as obvious as foreign language classes, but CLS offers many languages at the beginning level and is interested in students from these fields, too!

These offices are doubly useful if you're planning an information session at a school other than your university, where it won't be as easy for you to set things up alone or advertise your session by word of mouth.

## When to Start

---

The CLS application opened in early October and closes on Thursday, November 14. The majority of our outreach happens in September and October so students have adequate time to work on their applications. However, CLS does outreach throughout the year to encourage students to plan to apply in the fall and to talk about the value of studying abroad through *any* program, not just CLS, so if you have opportunities to do outreach in the spring or another time of year, that can be impactful too.

## Getting the Word Out

---

In addition to collaborating with offices across a campus, there are several ways to let students know about your CLS information session. You can download CLS Program fliers from the [Alumni Outreach](#) and [Advisor Resources pages on our website](#) and print them out, or make your own flier announcing the date and time of the session. You can email professors to let them know, write information about the session on the board in language classrooms, or create a Facebook event.

# Structuring an Information Session

---

The easiest way to structure a CLS information session is to download the CLS [alumni PowerPoint](#) from our website. The PowerPoint file has notes attached to each slide to help guide what you say. It also focuses in large part on providing a frame for you to share your experience of the CLS Program.

If you're PowerPoint-averse, or if your event isn't PowerPoint-oriented, you might still want to look at the PowerPoint before you present, just to see what information it contains and how it's structured. All of the key points about CLS – how the program works, which languages and levels are offered, who's eligible for the program, and how to apply – are in the PowerPoint.

While attendees of an information session will be interested in all of the details about the program, all of that information is also available on our website and in our informational YouTube videos, so it's ok not to focus too heavily on things like eligibility and the details of each language program. What *you* bring to the presentation is your personal experiences from the program, and we encourage you to share those stories! Students should walk away from your information session or classroom presentation excited about the idea of studying a language abroad and the benefits that are offered through a funded program like CLS.

Overall, a good length for your session is 15 to 20 minutes of presentation from you, followed by about 15 minutes for questions.

If appropriate, you can collect names and email addresses at your information session. Check with the offices you worked with on campus to see if they would like this information to follow up with interested students; you may also send it to us at [clsalumni@americancouncils.org](mailto:clsalumni@americancouncils.org).

## Social Media

---

The CLS Program is active on Instagram, Facebook, and X, and we value engaging with our alumni through those channels. We encourage you to post memories from your time participating in the CLS Program, reunions with people you met through the CLS Program, and stories of how you are continuing language learning. This content helps future CLS scholars to see where the program can take them, and to demonstrate the impact of programs like CLS to the people who fund them!

When you post content relevant to your CLS experience and language learning, consider tagging:

- CLS Program (of course!)
  - Instagram: @CLSscholarship, X: @CLSscholarship, Facebook: /clscholarship
- U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
  - Instagram: @ExchangeOurWorld
  - X: @ECAatState, @ECA\_AS, @exchangealumni
  - Facebook: /ExchangeProgramsAtState
- Your local elected representatives
- Your CLS host institution
- Your home university
- U.S. Embassy of your host institution location

If you're interested in some spiffy photo frames to make your content pop, we recommend Canva, a free online design tool.

# Frequently Asked Questions

---

## ***Can I give an information session even if I'm planning to apply for the program again?***

Yes, of course! There is nothing bad about an information session presented by someone who liked the program enough to want to apply again.

## ***Can I give an information session if I participated in CLS a few years ago?***

Yes, alumni from all years of the CLS Program are welcome to give information sessions. We recommend that you spend some time on the [CLS website](#) to become familiar with what might have changed about the program since you participated, and of course, you can [email us](#) with questions.

## ***Should I tell you about my information session?***

Please do! [Email us](#) and let us know. Ideally, you'll tell us about it before it happens, so we can help you promote it. If that's not possible, please tell us afterward, so we know how to explain the sudden uptick in stellar applications from your college or university! Please also send us photos of you presenting if you are able to have any taken.

## ***Can I co-host my information session?***

Sure! You can check the [CLS alumni database](#) to see if there are other CLS alumni at your institution or at nearby schools. You can also co-host with a faculty or staff member from one of the departments or offices we mentioned above. Another option is to speak at a study abroad fair or an information session for other study abroad or fellowship opportunities. Check with your study abroad and fellowship/scholarship offices for schedules of these events.

## ***Can I give information sessions at other universities?***

Yes! The CLS Program is interested in attracting applicants from the full range of American colleges and universities, so we encourage alumni to present at large public institutions, liberal arts colleges, community colleges, institutions with a technical or engineering focus, and minority-serving institutions such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, tribal colleges, and institutions with high minority enrollment. If you're interested in traveling to a nearby campus to present, please [send us an email](#). Depending on funding and on approval for your trip, we may be able to reimburse you for expenses such as gas and mileage or public transportation fares.

## ***I don't have a printing budget for CLS fliers. Can you send me some?***

We have a limited budget for print materials, but please [contact us](#) to check whether we have some available to send you. You can always distribute materials to interested students electronically as well.

## ***What do I do if someone asks a question I don't know the answer to?***

Don't worry! It's totally normal to have this happen, because we don't expect you to become an expert on CLS before you give a presentation. If the question is something you have experience with, you're welcome to share your story. This may not help answer the question fully, but it does give your listeners a little bit of personal perspective. For example, in answering a question about how often alternates for the scholarship are promoted to finalist status, you might share that you were an alternate who was promoted in mid-April, while also emphasizing that you don't know that statistic offhand.

If you don't have experience to share, a simple, polite, "I'm not sure about that, and I don't want to give you incorrect information" is fine. The first line of defense against tough questions is to direct applicants to the [FAQ](#) on the CLS website. You should also have our general email address, [cls@americancouncils.org](mailto:cls@americancouncils.org), ready to provide to attendees.

## ***I have other outreach ideas. Want to hear them?***

Yes! Please [email us](#).

# Appendix: Sample Campus Outreach Emails

---

## VIRTUAL EVENT OUTREACH EMAILS

**Subject:** Scholarship Information Session

Dear Dr. **Ivanov**,

My name is **Taylor** and I'm a **junior at Western State**. I spent last summer studying **Mandarin at Tamkang University in New Taipei, Taiwan** as a recipient of the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program. CLS is a program providing funded overseas intensive language study to U.S. undergraduate and graduate students in 13 different critical-need foreign languages.

I think this is a great opportunity for students at **Western State -- especially International Relations majors who are hoping to expand their knowledge of a critical language and world region --** so I'm planning a virtual information session about the scholarship this fall. I'm contacting you to find out if the **International Relations department** is interested in co-hosting or helping to advertise the session. In particular, I'd appreciate help **advertising the session to IR majors** and setting up a **Zoom or other videoconferencing platform webinar**. I'd also like to invite you and your colleagues in the department to attend the session and find out more about the scholarship.

Thank you for your time. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

**Taylor Brown**

Dear **Ms. Forrester**,

Hello! My name is **Jessica** and I recently graduated from **the University of New Mexico**. I spent this summer studying **Japanese** with **Okayama University in Okayama, Japan** as a recipient of the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program. CLS is a program providing funded overseas intensive language study to U.S. undergraduate and graduate students in 13 different critical-need foreign languages. You can read more about the opportunity here: <http://clscholarship.org/>.

CLS is also open to community college students, and I think it is a great opportunity for students at **Central New Mexico Community College -- especially honors students who may be interested in expanding their knowledge of a critical language and world region through funded study abroad --** so I'm interested in conducting a virtual information session about the scholarship for students at your campus this fall. I'm contacting you to find out if the **honors department** is interested in hosting a virtual information session or helping me to set up some brief virtual class visits to share information **sometime the week of October 2**.

I thank you in advance for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

**Jessica Spencer**

## IN-PERSON EVENT OUTREACH EMAILS

**Subject:** Scholarship Information Session

Dear Dr. Ivanov,

My name is Taylor and I'm a junior at Western State. I spent last summer studying Korean in Gwangju, South Korea as a recipient of the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program. CLS is a program providing funded overseas intensive language study to U.S. undergraduate and graduate students in 13 different critical-need foreign languages.

I think this is a great opportunity for students at Western State -- especially International Relations majors who are hoping to expand their knowledge of a critical language and world region -- so I'm planning an information session about the scholarship this fall. I'm contacting you to find out if the International Relations department is interested in co-sponsoring or helping to advertise the session. In particular, I'd appreciate help advertising the session to IR majors and reserving McKinley Auditorium on September 27<sup>th</sup>. If the department has funding available to print color fliers or provide snacks at the session, I would appreciate that as well. I'd also like to invite you and your colleagues in the department to attend the session and find out more about the scholarship.

Thank you for your time. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

Taylor Brown

**Subject:** Funded Opportunity for CNM Students

Dear Ms. Forrester,

Hello! My name is Jessica and I recently graduated from the University of New Mexico. I spent this summer studying beginning Urdu in Lucknow, India as a recipient of the U.S. Department of State's Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program. CLS is a program providing funded overseas intensive language study to U.S. undergraduate and graduate students in 13 different critical-need foreign languages. You can read more about the opportunity here: <http://clscholarship.org/>.

CLS is also open to community college students, and I think it is a great opportunity for students at Central New Mexico Community College -- especially honors students who may be interested in expanding their knowledge of a critical language and world region through funded study abroad -- so I'm interested in conducting an information session about the scholarship on your campus this fall. I'm contacting you to find out if the honors department is interested in hosting an information session or helping me to set up some brief classroom visits to share information sometime the week of November 10.

I thank you in advance for your consideration. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best wishes,

Jessica Spencer