



CRITICAL LANGUAGE SCHOLARSHIP



LEARN LANGUAGES OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE.

Celebrating 20 years of excellence, the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program is a funded immersive summer study abroad opportunity for American college and university students to learn languages of strategic importance to the United States' national security and economic prosperity.

WHY CHOOSE CLS?

Participants receive the equivalent of one year of college-level language study in just eight weeks through intensive language instruction and cultural activities that reinforce language learning and intercultural competence. The CLS Program offers:

- Intensive coursework led by native speakers
- Homestays or dormitory living with local students
- Weekly conversations with language partners

Since its inception in 2006, the CLS Program has supported over 10,000 participants from all 50 U.S. states, equipping them with language and intercultural skills that set them apart in today's global job market.

The CLS Program is a program of the U.S. Department of State with funding provided by the U.S. Government and supported in its implementation by American Councils for International Education.

PROGRAM BENEFITS:



Advance your language proficiency through intensive language instruction and cultural enrichment experiences



Earn official certification of language gains through the ACTFL OPI test



Build lifelong connections with host communities and fellow participants



Join a distinguished network of U.S. Department of State Exchange Alumni

LANGUAGES OFFERED:

Arabic

Chinese

Hindi

Japanese

Korean

Persian

Portuguese

Russian

Swahili

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CLS PROGRAM DETAILS

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Applicants must be:

- U.S. citizen or national
- At least 18 years old by May 15, 2026
- Enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate-level degree-granting program at a U.S. college or university at the time of application

Preference will be given to veterans of the U.S. armed forces. Automatic semifinalist status will be given to alumni of the 2025 CLS Spark virtual initiative who maintain eligibility and apply to continue studying their Spark language.



WHAT PRIOR STUDY IS NEEDED?

None

Hindi, Persian, Portuguese, Swahili

1 Year

Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Russian

2 Years

Japanese

HOW IS THE PROGRAM STRUCTURED?

- 8 weeks of immersive language and cultural learning
- 18 hours per week of small-group instruction led by expert teachers
- Weekly one-on-one sessions with instructors
- Regular conversation practice with local language partners
- Hands-on cultural activities and excursions to historic sites
- Comprehensive support from dedicated program staff

20 YEARS OF GLOBAL IMPACT

The CLS Program is part of a U.S. government effort to increase the number of Americans studying and mastering critical foreign languages. CLS alumni use their skills to advance U.S. interests, foster innovation, and address global challenges in fields such as technology, medicine, and national defense. According to surveyed alumni who are currently employed:



96% say that the skills gained through CLS made them more competitive in the job market.



93% say that CLS positively impacted their employability.



68% say that they use knowledge of their host country in their current job.

HEAR FROM OUR ALUMNI:



"Studying Mandarin opened doors I hadn't imagined before. It directly helped me secure a position at an association of private equity companies, where my language skills and cultural insights became invaluable." **- CLS Program Scholar**

APPLY TODAY

Join us in celebrating 20 years of language learning excellence:

