I plan to use the Undergraduate Language Grant to fund my studies at the University of Texas at Austin’s Summer Arabic Institute. Receiving the grant to facilitate my participation in the program this summer will advance my progress towards achieving my academic and professional goals in two important ways. In the short term, supplemental Arabic study over the summer will further prepare me for studying abroad in Jordan in the fall. Meanwhile, in the long run, the program will contribute to my fluency in Arabic, a skill that will help me achieve my goal of joining the Foreign Service and working in the Middle East throughout my career.

I selected the Middle East as my area of concentration in my History major, a decision that has led to an enormous enhancement of my knowledge of the region. I have thoroughly enjoyed the survey courses I have taken on the subject, but Professor Lauziere’s Islamic Political Thought seminar, which I am enrolled in this quarter, has already proven itself as the most relevant and engaging class I have taken thus far at Northwestern. In this seminar, we delve into the motivating factors and reasoning that lie behind state and individual decision making in the Middle East rather than simply reviewing the facts of various events and narratives. For example, I am now aware of the differences between Islamism and Jihadism, an important distinction when analyzing the influence of religious fervor on violence. This exercise has provided me with a deeper understanding of the region and a greater appreciation of its immense complexity, and I expect that it will also prove helpful in anticipating future actions in the Middle East, a skill that I hope to use in my professional life.

I hope that the combined political, historical, cultural, and linguistic knowledge of the region that I will develop throughout my college experience will satisfactorily equip me for a career in the Middle East. After I graduate, I plan to apply to the Foreign Service as a Political Officer, meaning that I would be assessing and analyzing conditions in my host country and negotiating with members of foreign governments on a regular basis. Fluency in Arabic and experience abroad would both increase my chances of attaining this job and improve my performance in the position, and receiving the Undergraduate Language Grant this summer would benefit my efforts to achieve these objectives.

In the immediate future, I have already decided the next two steps in working toward this larger goal: attending UT Austin’s Arabic Institute this summer and then studying in Jordan this fall. In order to maximize the advantages of either program, it is essential that I participate in both, not simply choose one or the other. It is particularly important that I participate in an intensive Arabic program this summer for several reasons. First, it will negate the possibility of my current Arabic skills becoming rusty during the summer months. More importantly, though, the most advanced study abroad program in Jordan that Northwestern recommends to students, CIEE’s Arabic Language program, requires at least seven quarters of Arabic prior to departure. Without summer instruction, I would be unprepared for this program and would have to participate in CIEE’s Language and Culture program instead. Though both programs are excellent, the latter has no language requirement prior to departure and the majority of classes are conducted in English. In the Arabic Language program, however, all classes are taught entirely in Arabic, facilitating more complete immersion to improve my language skills. Intensive summer language study is the only way to ensure that I will be prepared for rigorous and productive coursework in the fall, and the Undergraduate Language Grant will enable me to attain this vital supplementary training.
I am currently enrolled in my second year of Arabic at Northwestern, having begun the sequence upon my arrival in the fall of Freshman year. I am at the Intermediate level, though summer study will advance my skills to Intermediate High proficiency, and study abroad in the fall should promote me to Advanced status. At present, I possess a strong command of all of the vocabulary and grammar we have covered thus far, and I am quite comfortable with the basics of the underlying grammatical structure that forms the foundation of the entire Arabic language. My speaking and listening comprehension skills, however, require significant development, and it would be helpful to receive some assistance in these areas before I depart for Jordan. To this end, UT’s Summer Arabic Institute incorporates both formal and colloquial Arabic into its curriculum and offers weekly chat classes. With this instruction, I will become much more confident in the Jordanian Shami dialect that I will be using to communicate in the fall, thereby minimizing my adjustment time in the country and maximizing the program’s linguistic and cultural benefits.

I selected the University of Texas at Austin’s Summer Arabic Institute from amongst the plethora of programs both in the United States and abroad because of its excellent and acclaimed curriculum and its proximity to home. UT’s Department of Middle Eastern Studies boasts a distinguished faculty, including two of the three writers of the primary Arabic textbook for English speakers, making it one of the best programs in the country. Through the Summer Institute’s intensive language and culture curriculum, I will be able to learn a year’s worth of Arabic in a mere ten weeks. The program provides 21 contact hours with professors and two cultural events every week for instructive and immersive purposes, as well as daily Open Tutoring and a Student Support advisor as sources of constant support throughout the program in addition to the speaking instruction I mentioned earlier.

Additionally, I live in Austin, Texas, and the fact that I will be studying Arabic intensively while living at home will allow me to return to the same hostess job I had last summer, thereby providing a form of occupational security and easing any financial burden that the program might incur. Living at home will also further alleviate the financial burden without sacrificing any language-learning benefits of dorm life because the dorms do not have an Arabic-only policy during the program.

The only potential problem with this program is that its classes begin on June 2\textsuperscript{nd}, more than a week before Northwestern students complete our final exams. However, I am already actively working to resolve this issue. I emailed both the director and the assistant director of the program back in November, and they have both promised me their support in working through this conflict. I also met with the assistant director while I was in Austin over winter break, and he explained to me that the program would be perfectly willing to admit me despite the overlap in schedules as long as my language proficiency test indicates that my Arabic skills have progressed enough to ensure that starting a week late would not leave me behind in my coursework. Given that I will likely be placed in the Intermediate level, which uses the same textbook that I have already started in my second year of Arabic here at Northwestern, I do not anticipate the late start being problematic.