Jennifer Pickering of Vanderbilt University has been selected for the U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Program to study Bangla in Bangladesh during the summer of 2014.

Pickering is among the approximately 550 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students selected for the U.S. Department of State’s CLS Program in 2014 to study Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Indonesian, Japanese, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, or Urdu languages. U.S. students will spend seven to ten weeks in intensive language institutes this summer in 13 countries where these languages are spoken. The CLS Program provides fully-funded, group-based intensive language instruction and structured cultural enrichment experiences designed to increase language fluency and cultural competency. CLS Program participants are expected to continue their language study beyond the scholarship and apply their critical language skills in their future professional careers.

The CLS Program is part of a U.S. government effort to expand dramatically the number of Americans studying and mastering critical foreign languages. Selected finalists for the 2014 CLS Program hail from all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia and represent more than 200 institutions of higher education from across the United States, including public and private universities, liberal arts colleges, minority-serving institutions and community colleges.

During CLS Program outreach activities, particular attention is paid to states/regions of the United States that have been historically under-represented in the CLS applicant pool and to students from diverse backgrounds and academic majors. The CLS Program also encourages diversity in the independent, merit-based review process. In 2014, over 300 professionals representing 43 states and the District of Columbia, and 183 institutions participated in the selection process for the CLS Program.

CLS Program participants are among the more than 40,000 academic and professional exchange program participants supported annually by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to promote mutual understanding and respect between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The CLS Program is administered by American Councils for International Education and The Ohio State University / Ohio University.

For further information about the CLS Program or other exchange programs offered by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, please visit our websites at http://www.clscholarship.org and http://exchanges.state.gov.