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Study Abroad Personal Statement

I did not plan on majoring in Japanese Language and Culture. Actually, up until the last month of college applications in high school, I was determined to apply to an art school and become an illustrator. It was not until I looked at a list of my most notable accomplishments—traveling to Japan, creating a Japanese culture club, interning in a Japanese classroom, and taking Japanese courses at community college—that I realized my interest in Japan was now a dominant influence in my life. In that moment, I realized I would enjoy an education and career in Japanese studies and applied to California State University, Monterey Bay.

My interest in the Japanese language was sparked when I first began to explore the internet. For the majority of my life, I had no interest in the world beyond my small home on the southern coast of California. It was not until my internet explorations that I was exposed to the Japanese language for the first time. At that time, I became captivated with the complete novelty of both the culture and the sound of the language in comparison to my sheltered American life.

Now in my sophomore year of university, I have studied Japanese for nearly three years. However, I firmly believe that a foreign language or culture cannot be fully understood through classroom instruction alone. For that reason, I seek to further my understanding of Japanese language and culture by studying abroad in Japan.

My primary aspiration while abroad is to develop my conversational skills by immersing myself in a completely Japanese environment. I have witnessed the immense growth of exchange

students' English skills during their time in America and desire a similar experience in Japan. Additionally, I hope to use the skills I gain abroad to enhance my current ability as a Japanese tutor. I believe returning with my own first-hand experience and increased fluency will benefit the students I assist as a peer tutor.

An additional academic goal that I aim to accomplish while abroad is to gain insight into my senior capstone project topic. While there are many aspects of Japanese culture that I am especially interested in, such as kanji and tea, I hope to somehow incorporate my interest in art and my minor in Communication Design as well. I believe my unique experiences in Japan will guide me toward a topic that will complement my interests.

I also want to study abroad to experience a different teaching environment. My current career objective is to become an English teacher in Japan as a part of the Japanese Exchange Teaching (JET) Program. As such, I am interested in opportunities to explore different teaching styles and situations. I have never participated in an international exchange program before, therefore I hope to gain a unique perspective during this experience that will be beneficial to my future in education.

Overall, I am inexpressibly excited to study abroad in Japan. I believe this experience will allow me to further my understanding of Japanese language and culture in ways that cannot be replicated in the classroom. Not only do I look forward to the unique experiences I will undoubtedly encounter, but I also anticipate the opportunity for personal growth in both my language and life skills that I can then incorporate in my future as a student and as a teacher.