

Canton, GA, 30115

5 April 2014

Judges, Senior Project

Sequoyah High School

4485 Hickory Road

Canton, GA 30115

Dear Judges:

You guys probably already know my name is Yusemi Mondragón; unlike many teenagers, however, I like to go by my last name. This school year has been a big awakening – in less than a year I began learning a new language, enlisted in the army, gained acceptance into UNG, and decided what I will be doing for the rest of my life. I am very excited to begin my life on my own, but at the same time I am terrified and scared of failing and disappointing my mother; as many of my close friends know, I will become the first person in my family to graduate high school and attend college. I am less than a few months away from accomplishing my lifelong dream – serving my country and learning Mandarin Chinese – but at the same time I cannot help but wish I had more time. I am confident that one year from the date I ship to basic training I will be promoted from private to private first class; my confidence also makes me believe I will be commissioning as an officer in the Army by the time I graduate from the University of North Georgia. For these exact reasons I decided to do my senior project on something that would help me accomplish my goals; my senior project was over my experience at the Federal Service Language Academy while learning Mandarin Chinese.

In the last 10 years, the United States has realized that Chinese is the new trend. For many years, the U.S. has not made the teaching of foreign languages a priority in the school systems around the country. For my research paper I decided to focus on the importance of Chinese as a foreign language in the United States. The research paper became my foundation for the reasons why Chinese is one of the best decisions I can make with my life. Through the information I was able to find, I learned how important Chinese has become in the business world. Many wealthy families in the past ten years have increased their demand for Mandarin Chinese speaking nannies. Many schools around the West coast have begun to offer Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language class in high school; in some states, such as South Carolina, Mandarin Chinese is being offered at an elementary school level to make the learning of the language more proficient. The demand for Chinese speaking people has been dramatically increasing due to China's new stand point on the global economy. According to my research, federal agencies – the FBI and the CIA – have been looking for American citizens who are proficient on Chinese. Thanks to all the information I acquired through my research, I was able to see how learning to speak Mandarin Chinese would help me later on in life. The importance of foreign languages in the United States

also became apparent; Etowah became the first Cherokee County high school to offer Chinese and I hope that Sequoyah will soon offer it as well.

My senior project ended with a successful intangible product: I received an A on the class along with a certificate for graduating from FSLA. For three weeks I was living on-campus at the University of North Georgia. It was a tough three weeks filled with vigorous studying; we had class from eight in the morning until five in the afternoon. Our only breaks were breakfast, lunch, and dinner – any other time we would all be working on homework, projects, and vocabulary. Chinese is one of the hardest languages to learn but I am glad I took the challenge. FSLA was a great opportunity and I am glad I took advantage of it. Most of my hours that were dedicated to my senior project were inside the classroom. I was able to learn the colors, the days of the week, the months of the year, and the traditions in just the first day. I was amazed by how much I actually learned in just three weeks. FSLA did an amazing job in immersing me into the Chinese language and I believe that is the reason I succeeded. The whole experience challenged me to a whole new level but nothing compared to the struggle of getting through Challenge Day. My Chinese instructor, Rao Ling, challenged us by making everybody go a whole day without speaking any English. For 24 hours I was only allowed to speak Chinese. This became my greatest challenge because there were plenty of words I did not know; it became nearly impossible to express myself. Challenge Day definitely challenged everything I learned in the three weeks I was in FSLA; my brain was put on the spot and forced to work to its full capacity. Even though Challenge Day was hard, I was able to survive it; I, Yusemi Mondragón, survived a whole day speaking Chinese instead of English or Spanish. I admit, I had never been more proud of myself.

My career choice after the Army will be either intelligence in a federal agency or translator for a business company. My senior project allowed me to open my mind to a new language and culture; if I want to be successful in the FBI or as a translator I need to understand not only the language but the culture as well. The three weeks I spent in FSLA made me realize my love for foreign languages; thanks to FSLA I was able to make up my mind about what I want to do for the rest of my life. Through the research that I conducted for my research paper I began to see that a career in the FBI could be easily acquired if I become fluent or proficient on Mandarin Chinese. The Army will definitely be a big help because it is experience that can open my doors to jobs in the federal agencies. Many people find Mandarin Chinese to be one of the hardest languages to learn; I found Mandarin Chinese to be one of the most interesting, not hardest, languages to learn. Through this experience I discovered how intelligent I really am – Rao Ling, the Chinese instructor, told me that not many people are able to survive a whole day without speaking anything but Chinese as easily as I was able to do it. The first couple of days in class I was completely clueless but by the third day, I was able to catch up on certain words that allowed me to comprehend what Rao Ling was saying. According to many people, learning a new language is not so easy but for me foreign languages are quite easy to absorb. My senior project was the proof that I needed to show my mother that I truly can succeed in the real world with a degree on international affairs and Chinese. The day I received my certificate of accomplishment for FSLA I went directly to the admissions office of UNG and submitted my early admission application; without any doubt I easily gained acceptance and I will soon continue my journey on the study of Chinese.

I appreciate the time all of you have taken to be here today as I present to you all what I plan on doing for the rest of my life. Thank you all so much for the time that was spent on reviewing the project I spend many hours on. To me my senior project was more than just a school project; my senior project was the turn I needed to take in order to begin my journey. Once again, thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Yusemi Mondragón