



Cultural Connections

Upon leaving her home in Quito, Ecuador to attend the University of Delaware, Sara Suarez, AS18, was worried about both the financial costs of college and the inevitable language barrier. She knew some English, but that didn't stop the anxiety from translating into stress and a lack of sleep when her freshman semester was finally underway.

"I was afraid of the challenge," she says. But after facing that challenge head-on with time spent in the classroom and libraries, Sara, now a sophomore majoring in International Relations (IR), found that her dedication paid off – in more ways than one.

While enrolled in UD's English Language Institute (ELI), a program that offers high-quality English instruction to degree-seeking students, Sara excelled in her classes and was named a recipient of the Harvey C. '38 and Sarah H. Moore Scholarship, which supports undergraduate students on the basis of academic merit and financial need. The scholarship is funded by friends and family of the Moores, who are dedicated UD supporters.

Sara asserts that earning a scholarship was one of the happiest moments in her life. "I called my father and told him," she recounts. "I felt that I didn't have to wait until graduation to make him proud of me, and for that I am very grateful. It's pushed me to keep going."

Freed of financial anxiety and empowered to explore the full breadth of social and extracurricular opportunities at UD, Sara quickly immersed herself in the diverse cultural backgrounds of her fellow ELI students. When she made friends with several students from China, their culture, history and outlook began to

leave an indelible mark on her plans for life after college.

"I was initially interested in becoming a veterinarian and studying French," she says, "but my Chinese friends encouraged me to [study] a radically different and more challenging language and culture."

Sara has since added a focus on Asian Regional Studies to her IR major. She hopes to eventually earn a master's degree at the University of Beijing, with the ultimate goal of pursuing a career at the United Nations as a Chinese-fluent diplomat.

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She's also left an equally strong impression on her friends. When her Chinese roommate was in danger of failing a class but hesitant to reach out to her ELI professor for help, Sara pulled from her own cultural background and encouraged her roommate to be proactive, share her thoughts and, ultimately, connect with the instructor. That, in turn, helped Sara realize her own potential.

"Because she had repeated the [class] several times, she was thinking about going back to China," Sara adds. "But she followed my advice and ended up graduating. I realized I was very comfortable being a leader, solving conflicts and helping people."