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VSAUCI ROSE PAGEANT SCHOLARSHIP 2024

Prompt 1: How has your heritage affected your educational or professional career? Furthermore, how has your heritage influenced you into joining the SAP-VN Mobile Care Mission in Vietnam?

Growing up Vietnamese has shaped my identity and perspective. As the only one who knows English in my family, I have consistently taken my mother to her doctor's appointments, and most recently, accompanied her to her surgery. Through these experiences, spanning multiple doctor visits, I observed her Vietnamese healthcare providers actively incorporating my mother's Vietnamese cultural values into their health advice. Similarly, at my current job as a medical assistant, we serve a large population of Vietnamese older adults who come to their office visits without English knowledge. Nonetheless, being bilingual has helped me in assisting the patients effectively through obtaining their chief complaints and other needs as well as being able to relate to them culturally. These experiences have been very rewarding as they have shaped my perspectives on providing care to patients with diverse values and thus tailoring healthcare delivery to meet each patient's unique needs. All of which have instilled in me an unwavering decision to become a culturally competent physician who can deliver compassionate care that best advocates for the patient's health.

I also connected with my Vietnamese roots through volunteering as a teaching assistant at a non-profit Vietnamese Language School. This organization aimed to preserve Vietnamese cultures overseas by offering Vietnamese lessons to people of all ages. My volunteer work revolved around guiding students through in-class assignments and occasionally leading class lessons. These experiences ensure that I will deliver care aligning with the socio-cultural needs of my future patients as an aspiring physician. They have also led to the fact that when I saw the SAP-VN Mobile Care Mission 2024, I immediately became interested. As I prepare to apply to medical school in the upcoming 2024-2025 cycle during my gap year after graduating from UCI, I am eager to contribute to a mission that will broaden my perspectives on healthcare outside the US while giving back to my Vietnamese heritage. Vietnam personally holds a special place in my heart as it is where I was born and raised, so being able to give back to the community that nurtured me has always been a personal goal. The mission presents a meaningful opportunity to gain insights into the challenges faced by individuals in remote areas of Vietnam, which will enrich my cultural competence and connect with like-minded individuals, while making a difference in the well-being of the underprivileged in my homeland.

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Prompt 2: If chosen for this scholarship, how do you envision it impacting education and career path moving forward? What new doors could it open for you?

If awarded this scholarship, it would greatly assist me as a student currently relying on full financial aid in pursuing upcoming endeavors. Specifically, it would provide necessary support in covering the expenses associated with MCAT preparations and applying to medical school for the 2024-2025 medical school application cycle. With these financial burdens eased, I could dedicate more time to focus on preparing for the MCAT exam and ensuring my applications to medical school are thorough and well-prepared. This means I could avoid the added stress of having to work extra hours at my clinical job while juggling MCAT studying to afford the costs associated with applying to medical school. Currently, I am financing my MCAT preparation materials as well as my medical school application costs using savings from my employment. However, that would mean I need to balance my weekly work hours with my academic responsibilities, research, and volunteering work.

Being chosen for this scholarship means having access to opportunities that were previously out of reach. I will be pursuing a Master of Science in Biological Sciences during my gap year between undergraduate studies and medical school. This decision stems from my strong desire to enhance my engagement with a cancer research project in my current laboratory at UC Irvine, which is driven by my eagerness to deepen my scientific understanding and recognizing the connection between research and medicine. Nonetheless, the tuition aspect of the program has been posing a significant challenge on top of my existing financial hurdles in all expenses related to applying to medical school. Despite diligently saving from my part-time job and actively seeking external scholarships, meeting these financial obligations remains daunting. While I plan to continue my clinical job alongside my studies, the demands of a full-time Master's program make it challenging to generate sufficient income to cover the associated expenses. Without external financial assistance, achieving this academic milestone may be unattainable, given the limited aid available for graduate program students.

In essence, if awarded the scholarship, the entirety of the funds would be allocated towards buying my ticket to Vietnam, MCAT preparation materials for my upcoming MCAT test date in April, or partially financing the costs of my medical school applications in May. This support would allow me to promptly pursue my goals and aspirations in the field of medicine.