

“Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself,” penned the iconic Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, a quote that stayed with me since reading it as a young student in Taiwan. While thousands of miles away from America, Moscow, and other points of the world, I romanticized about exploring and discovering – it was always my objective to mold myself into a global citizen. However, before I ever set foot on a plane, I explored the world through novels, film, culture, and most importantly, studying foreign languages. My eyes opened to the world’s spectrum of diversity and multiculturalism, and from my perch in the Far East, reading and studying new languages served as my passport to experience the globe. This spirit of discovery, which I developed as a child, not only birthed an intellectual passion for the study of Russian and other foreign languages, but also a strong desire to help and serve humanity. I integrated these interests, and seek to concentrate in both Slavic Languages and Biology at Harvard University. My goal is to broaden my knowledge of the Russian language, and merge it with my study of Biology and nutrition in order to “change myself” according to the needs of all people in the United States, Russia and the former Soviet nations, and all points in between.

The Russian language commanded my curiosity as a student. When I was in Taipei, I transported myself to Russia by reading the *Brothers Karamazov*, *Lolita*, and *War and Peace*. I was intrigued by the grandiose stories, but more so by the intricate cultures that provided the context. I carefully sketched down words, names, and places that were unfamiliar to me, and diligently studied them. This not only cultivated my interest in Russian language, culture, and history, but also shaped my analytical skills and curiosity that fueled my academic excellence. I developed the work ethic and leadership abilities through my growing passion for Russian, which provided me with far more than a prospective course of study. In addition, my novels and books provided me with refuge from instability at home, particularly when my parents’ marriage was spiraling and ended with divorce. Like the central protagonists from the books I read, but far earlier in my lifetime, I acted with strength, conviction, and resolve amid trying times. While my parents’ divorce concluded a key chapter in my life, the struggles it brought forced me to develop the courage and leadership to endure and remain optimistic. I learned that becoming supremely educated was key, and devoted myself wholly to my studies. My classmates acknowledged my drive and elected me as Class President, and entrusted me with the concerns they considered most important. I earned the trust of my mother at home as a household leader, and the confidence of my fellow classmates within the classroom. Complimenting my passion for foreign language and culture, these experiences spurred my desire to lead, help those in need, and become a global health professional.

Foreign languages, I revealed, were immediate bridges toward broadening my worldview and intellect, and ultimately, my capacity to help individuals beyond national, ethnic, or cultural borders. In order to relate to individuals and communities beyond my borders, I must fluently speak their language. In line with my interest in Russian and Slavic Languages, my objective is to study the languages and literature of the region as an undergraduate, and ultimately transition on to graduate school to study nutrition and public health. My proficiency in both English Russian will allow me to become leading health professional at home in America, but also in Russia and the former Soviet states – where leadership in the area of nutrition is sorely needed.

My high school studies, and independent reading, have helped me develop a strong understanding of Eastern Europe and Russia. Furthermore, they also helped me cultivate a better understanding of my strongest subjects of interests, prospective college majors, and most importantly, myself. I always knew that I wanted to make a positive impact on the world, and particularly, countries and communities in need. But instead of seeking to change the world I sought to embrace it, located the beauty within it, and sought to “change myself” in order to better it. I identified my core talents and interests, such as my passion for foreign languages and cultures, philanthropy, pre-medical sciences and health – and gradually molded them in Taipei, and ultimately, as a high school student in Philadelphia. Joining the Harvard University community next fall will be an ideal opportunity to not only major in my principal areas of interest, but also develop the intellectual and personal abilities to better the world around me.

Taipei was home during my early youth, yet Philadelphia offered a *brave, new world* to grow as an individual. Following my parent’s divorce, my family separated and I left for the United States with my mother. My readings consoled me, and the words of the prominent Russian novelist, Fyodor Dostoevsky, captured my feelings at the time: “[I]t’s the great mystery of human life that old grief passes gradually into quiet tender joy.” Indeed, the pain of separation and relocation was gradually subsumed by the joy and optimism of being in a vibrant, new setting. I raced up the Art Museum steps *Rocky Balboa* scaled, visited the *Liberty Bell*, and toured the colonial structures and landmarks throughout the city. I not only had the privilege of observing American history, but also living within the very setting where much of it was spawned. Yet, the City’s rich spectrum of ethnic communities and cultures was what I found most exciting.

Philadelphia’s diversity and dynamism was riveting, and traveling through each of the city’s rich neighborhoods was akin to globetrotting from country to country. In one day, I was able to dine at a Russian eatery, drink coffee at a French pastry shop, and have Italian gelato. In addition, my high school classmates represented an array of different nationalities and cultures, and I even met Russian friends who provided me with intimate portals into their language and history. When I first arrived in Philadelphia, my limited English skills acted as a barrier from making friends and learning. Yet, my passion for learning languages accelerated my mastery of English, and in rapid time, I was able to excel in Advanced Placement courses and my International Baccalaureate curriculum. Much like my passion for Russian novels, my English fluency was facilitated by my reading of Mark Twain, Ernest Hemmingway, and contemporary writers such as Stephen King. I naturally made friends with classmates who shared my love of literature and language, and students who were interested in learning my native tongue – Mandarin Chinese. I enjoyed the fellowship I was making with students of all ethnicities and backgrounds, particularly the cultural exchange that was possible in a diverse city like Philadelphia. My love of language, new cultures, and diverse friends helped me become quadra-lingual, which only fueled my desire to learn more, explore more, and grow. Every day that passed, and each Philadelphian I befriended, provided me with the “tender joy” Karamazov wrote about, and bolstered my sense of belonging to my new hometown – the *city of brotherly love*.

Harvard University provided a vibrant setting, inside and outside of the classroom, to learn, grow, and become the global leader I aspire to be. I look forward to immersing myself in your student community, and learning from a diverse array of students who come from every point of the United States and distant corners of the world. My time in Philadelphia exposed me to the importance of multiculturalism, and the diversity of Harvard's student body is a principal reason why it ranks as my top choice University. Furthermore, your Slavic Languages Department and its prominent faculty offer the ideal program to master Russian, and also examine the cultures of Eastern Europe. Because it is my interest to pursue a double major, your Biology Department's also provides excellent resources to take courses that broaden my knowledge of the foundational science, the human anatomy, and health. Since it is my ultimate aspiration to transition onto graduate school after earning my undergraduate degree, focusing on both Russian and Biology will allow me to study health and nutrition at a top Public Health School, where I plan to focus on both domestic and international health. I also look forward to be an active leader with student organizations on campus, and balance my studies with the extracurricular involvement that will help me build lasting relationships with classmates, develop my leadership, and make a lasting impact on the Harvard community.

My passion for global cultures, and the Russian language in particular, evolved into my prism for the world. It molded my humanitarianism, cross-community literacy, and aspirations to ultimately become a *nutritionist without borders*. I look forward to immersing myself in the world of learning opportunities at Harvard University, will not only change me according to the image my beloved Tolstoy wrote about, but also the brand of global citizen and leader the world needs most today.