



My name is Ella Huan Chang Li. I was born forty-eight hours after Canada Day, love *Jane Eyre*, and play four instruments. This fall, I am honoured to attend the University of Southern California as a double major in Business Administration, with an emphasis on International Relations, and Accounting at the Marshall School of Business and Leventhal School of Accounting.

I was always intrigued by beauty. And in fifth grade, this spirit of inquiry manifested itself in the form of rhythmic gymnastics. When I wasn't leaping across the soft carpet while tossing satin ribbons, I was learning about Eastern European culture. My teammates, as well as my two coaches, were of Russian, Hungarian, and Croatian heritage. We celebrated Baba Marta Day and greeted one another with "привет" (hello) before practice. Rhythmic gymnastics became the first community in which I felt an interest in internationalism and I have spent my high school years searching for opportunities to learn more.

It was in the humble classrooms at school that I first realized my interest in economics. Out of the ten Advanced Placement courses I have taken, Microeconomics and Macroeconomics stuck with me the most. With both my parents being alumni of a celebrated business school and now my sister pursuing an economics degree at the University of California Berkeley, it didn't surprise me that concepts such as "opportunity cost" and "foreign exchange" were easily digested. Even still, I wanted more than anything to see these economic theories take place in real life.

I grasped that opportunity last spring when I was selected to participate as a scholar in the Stanford China Scholars Program (CSP). For four months, my class discussed contemporary subjects anywhere from the economic effects of urbanization to the influence of East Asian aesthetics in Western culture. Not only did I gain an academic perspective of the field, but I also felt more connected to my own Chinese heritage. The CSP was a critical turning point during which I realized the endless knowledge I could pursue, as long as I had the will to try. Then the question arose: where was the intersection between economics, international studies, and art?

The answer manifested itself the summer before my senior year. I was awarded a full-ride scholarship to the School of the New York Times Summer Academy. In Washington DC, I had the incredible opportunity to learn the foundations of International Relations and Development with Scott Culliane, the founding Executive Director of the U.S.-Europe Alliance. I remember the exhilarating day when I stood before my peers to present a mock presidential policy memorandum regarding the Russian-Ukraine war that I had crafted as my final project. Aside from the captivating lessons, I won 1<sup>st</sup> place in the NYT Summer Photojournalism Challenge with a photo I captured at the Smithsonian Renwick Art Gallery.

I am certain that business school is the right choice for me, but my love for the visual and performing arts will always continue. That is why USC is ideal: an institution that carries exceptional programs in both fields, virtually on the doorstep of Hollywood, and not far from my home in Vancouver. Creativity and curiosity are defining traits of mine, and I am confident that they will guide me through the next leg of my journey for both self-discovery and an extraordinary education.