

PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENTS/CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

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If someone had asked me ten years ago where I would be in ten years, I would not have imagined where I am now. I have overcome many challenges to get to here. My path is not typical and therefore, my unique background will help definitely contribute to the diversity of the University of California, Santa Barbara graduate student population. I have overcome the language barrier and cultural differences. In the process, I took leadership positions and helped give back to the community. Academically, I was brave enough to switch my major in order to pursue my true passion-mathematics.

As my parents did not have the opportunities to finish high school in Vietnam, they want me to have a good education and become helpful for society. It is my goal to not disappoint my parents and to become successful academically. My parents always made it clear to me that education is very important. Our family moved to the United States when I was 15 years old. I was placed into Pre-Algebra my freshman year in high school. My Pre-Algebra teacher also taught Calculus that year. One day, I was browsing his bookshelf, I picked up a big book titled 'Calculus.' I opened it and looked inside. A senior classmate saw me and then said something like 'What are you looking at that for? You'll never get there.' Four years later, I was taking AP Calculus during my senior year.

English was very hard for me to learn. I started at the lowest level, English Language Development A, in my high school freshman year. I came in barely knowing any English. In my sophomore year, there was this High School Exit Exam that everyone had to take. I heard stories of people failing; I was scared. But miraculously, I passed on my first try. From that point on, I studied English very hard. During my junior high school year I tried to test out of ELD C. I passed and skipped one level to English I my senior year. That made my parents very proud. I became motivated to not give up and try harder. When I finished high school, I applied to my local community college-Orange Coast College. This turned out to be one of the best experiences in my life.

My first two years of college, I was involved with a wonderful club called Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) Honors Club. There I took a leadership position as the president of the club. Together we did community service, helping our fellow students and community. One event that I remembered the most was called 'Caring S.H.O.S.' which stands for Students Helping Other Students. This is a non-profit organization that began in 2008 with a mission to help fellow students achieve their academic goals by helping them financially. We collected donated foods, clothing, and supplies and gave it out for free to students in need. I then transferred to Cal Poly Pomona to continue my education.

Mathematics was not my first major in college. My first switch was from Civil Engineering to Mechanical Engineering, when I found that I really liked Theoretical Mechanics.

I stayed with Engineering for three years. One year away from finishing my bachelor's degree, I switched to Mathematics. It took a lot of courage for me to do that. I am glad that I made that switch because I later found that my true passion is in math.

I was very lucky to be able to come and live in the United States. I was fully supported financially by the United States government to finish my undergraduate degree. I am very thankful for that. Without this financial aid, I am not sure if I would have the resources to pursue a higher education.

I wish to keep going and to obtain my Ph.D. in Mathematics. My life was not smooth all the way through. I had a lot of failures, but I did not give up. I learned from my mistakes—they only make me a better person. I really hope to be accepted into the University of California, Santa Barbara graduate program in Mathematics. I want to become a research mathematician, to prove new theorems, and to contribute not only to Mathematics, but also to my local community, to my state California, and to my new home, the United States.