Preface

During the summer of 2014, Frida Niebla took on an opportunity that would impact her life and inspire her future career path at San Diego State University (SDSU). She was given the opportunity to participate in Confucius Institute San Diego State University’s Shanghai Summer Program, which took place in Shanghai and Hangzhou, China. Fast forward three years, Frida Niebla is an upcoming International Business graduate at SDSU and intern at Confucius Institute San Diego State University (CISDSU) who has traveled to China twice and completed four years of Chinese language courses. As she looks forward to graduation, she recalls some of the most memorable experiences from the program that positively influenced her outlook on China’s language and culture. Frida is currently in the process of gaining her HSK Level 4 certification through the CISDSU and Hanban partnership for future use within her career. She thanks CISDSU for playing a key role in her success at SDSU.
Shanghai’s bund is known for its bright lights and vast skyline that was non-existent only a decade before.

In addition, I attended the Sichuan Face Changing Opera Show hosted by Dr. Lilly Cheng at the well-known, BaGuo BuYi restaurant. It was the first time I had experienced culturally-rich entertainment while enjoying an exquisite Sichuan style cuisine. The two-week program site visits included but was not limited to Hangzhou West Lake, Shanghai World Expo Center, YuYuan Garden and Shanghai Park Hyatt. The culture experiences were the highlights of my trip, as I felt fully immersed within the culture through special site visits, food and language.

The biggest connection I made from my first and second trip to China was the re-encounter I had with a woman who makes Chinese pancakes, also known as 手抓饼 shou zhua bing, in
front of ECNU. I introduced myself to her with my poor chinese when I first met her in 2014. After returning to China for a full semester, I couldn’t help but notice that she recognized me after three years. She was impressed by the vast difference in my chinese language skills from our first encounter. She introduced me to her little friend (小朋友xiao peng you) who lived a few doors down from her shop and would often visit her. As the semester progressed, I asked her little friend how she was doing as I walked past the small store. I even went ahead and taught her a few words in English. This humbling personal experience reminds me that language barriers are only temporary and it is up to oneself to

be courageous enough to break the barrier.

As an IB major, I was able to gain cultural competence through the diverse program and utilize my Beginner Chinese language skills to communicate with natives. I felt like the program was an awakening for me in terms of becoming culturally-diverse and striving to achieve success. Going back to Shanghai after the summer program was a good decision as I had obtained a knowledge base for know abouts in Shanghai. It was the perfect opportunity to travel around China through domestic airlines and the world-famous bullet trains. As a future SDSU alumni, I look back on my years at SDSU and reflect on the importance of my first trip to China. It has helped me share my travel experience and cultural competence during job interviews with well-known international companies and inspired me to travel more. It allowed me to gain confidence in my ability to learn a third language. I hope future Shanghai Summer program attendees get the opportunity to challenge themselves and gain a vast understanding of different cultures around the world.