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Mrs. Cecile deJongh
Manager
Financial Trust Company, Inc.
6100 Red Hook Quarter, B-3
St. Thomas, VI 00802

Dear Mrs. deJongh,

I am  a rising senior attending Charlotte Amalie High School. Thanks to your support, I was able to attend the Stanford 2011 session for Junior Statesmen of America this summer. I am greatly appreciative of your interest in this endeavor. The opportunity changed my outlook on various socio-economic issues and I feel as though it has made me more aware of problems concerning my community and the world. I will give a synopsis of my experiences, illustrate how they have benefited me, and explain how I intend to use the knowledge I have gained. I hope that my letter will give you a clear idea of how greatly you have aided my growth academically and socially.

Firstly, I chose to attend JSA primarily because of the testimonials of those who had previously attended the program. Looking more attractive to potential colleges was simply a bonus to me. As a whole, the experience was far more memorable and worthwhile than I initially thought it would have been. I remember when I first arrived on campus, it was past midnight, I was yearning for a bed, and I felt like a fish out of water. My chapter advisor, Robert, flew into the office to greet me and direct me to my room. His energy and jubilant demeanor somehow invigorated me and made me look forward to registration the next day.

I walked over to where students were required to drop off their congressional workshop articles and was immediately greeted by a young woman from Guam. She was outgoing, and awfully loquacious, a stark contrast to myself. It took me awhile to warm up to her but we inevitably became friends and begun assaulting each other with burning yet friendly insults not really

designed to hurt each other. I later realized that being able to effortlessly leave my comfort zone would become an invaluable skill. After registration, a small group of fellow students and I decided to head to the nearby mall during our spare time. We did not correctly gauge our remaining time in the shopping center and ended up frantically making our way back to campus for the designated time of return. I wish I had known then that deadlines should be met on time if not earlier.

Speech and political communication with Professor Patten was the class that facilitated my transformation from [REDACTED] Introductions into the class were awkward and irregular as they usually are in such situations, and everyone stuck to their own “social spheres”. Over time, our class became like a group of siblings who critiqued each other’s speeches and offered advice on where to improve. Professor Patten, as talkative as he may have been, was a great instructor who encouraged us to care more about what we learned than the grades we earned. Our class analyzed speeches, wrote film reactions, discussed propaganda, commercial advertisements, demagogues, and became accustomed with the different types of journalists. The class was assigned chapters to read, and when we realized that Professor Patten did not check to see if we did our reading we took our work less seriously. We learned (the hard way) however, that though Dr. Patten didn’t directly check on our reading assignments, he did expect us to do all of the reading, and held us responsible for the material. I came to understand that a teacher should not have to constantly badger his students for them to do their work, especially since he was treating us as if we were in college.

The Congressional Workshop debates were probably my favorite aspect of the program. From the very beginning, I was anxious to get up and argue with someone. Initially, I thought the introductory lessons on rhetoric, logical fallacies, debate research and the like were boring. All I really wanted to do was test my mettle against someone else. I later found that the previous instruction was helpful in structuring my speeches inside and outside of congressional workshop. Fortunately, my debate was on the last day which allowed me to incorporate all past observations and instructions into my arguments and delivery. I learned how to effectively support assertions made by myself and others as well as find ways to capture the attention of my audience through the use of rhetoric.

The classes were only half of the learning experience. The other half was meeting incredible people from all over the world. Everyone brought something unique to the program. Some people were from U.S. territories, some were from France, some the middle-east, and places too numerous too mention in their entirety. The JSA program introduced me to different accents, eating habits, and social customs, showing me that there is a world outside of St. Thomas.

The most valuable things are the ones that money cannot buy, such as memories, experience, and a sense-of-self. JSA has helped me to find the aforementioned "things" within myself, I intend to put the knowledge gained to use in the upcoming school year not only to benefit myself but others as well. The single greatest memory of all my great memories would have to be the feeling of being elected by your peers to represent them as a whole. Being chosen from within a group of my equals as an example of what to aspire to gave me a sense of something greater than myself. The graduation speech I was chosen to give for my class was probably my greatest personal accomplishment at that time, most certainly not the last though. Whether it be organizing an event or rallying support for a cause, I feel as though JSA has greatly enhanced my social skills. The experience continues to mean a lot to me, so thank you once again for your assistance. I sincerely appreciate it.

Best regards,

