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**Applied Program: Geology**

In the midst of the majestic grandeur of the Grand Canyon of Colorado, an excited Chinese girl with a huge traveling bag on her back looks so unique among the throngs of tourists visiting the famous site. Her eyes are not only filled with marvel of an average tourist at the exquisite wonders of Nature but also sparkles with the professional acuteness characteristic of a geologist in examining and reflecting on Nature’s geological mysteries. This scene has constantly occurred in my dreamscape. It is a dream in my heart that I have long wished to fulfill as early as possible. This is because I know that Grand Canyon is the most comprehensively preserved geological specimens that have survived intact in the world and that a geologist who has never been to the Grand Canyon is not a geologist in the truest sense of the word.

In 1998, with a sense of heartfelt satisfaction, I was matriculated into China’s most prestigious institution of geological study, Geological Department of Peking University, with distinguished scholastic performance at the most competitive nationwide university entrance examination. From that time on, my life has become inseparably intertwined with the science of geology. I firmly believe that I am quite fortunate because my study of geology offers a perfect fusion of my interests and my future career. This integration of personal interests with professional development has made possible the exercise of my full academic potential. I became immediately attracted to all the fascinating courses related to geology, courses that include Introduction of Geoscience, Rock Study, Pleistocene Geology and Geomorphology, Remote Sensing Geology, and others. My study of those fascinating courses changed the artificial understandings I first had about geology, turning my curious inquiries of many geological theories into rational reflections. In those meditations, I felt exhilarated for each advance mankind has achieved in the process of geological studies; yet I also perceived the weight of the responsibilities when I found out that mankind is still perplexed by a great variety of unresolved geological problems. For example, the failure to understand the mechanism the relative purity of rare minerals has severely hindered the utilization of those minerals. For another instance, in seismology, the prediction of possible disasters caused by earthquakes is far from satisfactory and in volcanology, mankind is still searching for optimum approaches to the utilization and exploitation of volcanic formations. Those issues have greatly excited my passion for undertaking serious explorations in the field of geological study.

Choosing geology, which is heavily tinted with the nature of practice, as my specialty has made inevitable my uniqueness and differences from most other girls because to be a geologist means to be a person of strong willpower. Many painstaking field trips have enabled me to become not only increasingly adapted to the rigors of life in the wilderness but also become well-acquainted with the procedures and methodologies of field investigations. I have developed a good command of the basic skills of geological study such as the determination of the rock direction, observation of rock croppings, and the analysis of strata structure. Most importantly, out of those involvements I have derived an immense sense of pleasure, or what might be called “the pleasure of taking pains”. Such a pleasure has made me deeply enamored of geology in its genuine sense.

A field trip that has wrought an indelible memory in my mind happened in May 2001 when I visited a coal mine in the southwestern part of China as a member of a study team organized by our university. A large-scale subsidence which happened during our reconnaissance of the local area claimed the lives of dozens of coalminers. Witnessing the incident with our own eyes strongly shocked us, for though we had repeatedly heard about similar incidents we have never seen such tragedies at such a close distance. In the face of dangers that could happen at any time, our team, headed by some teachers, decided to stay at the coalmine to make careful analysis of the local geological structure. Our subsequent studies indicated that as much of the coalmine was located within the karst basin with highly developed underground karst caves filled with sediments and water and that a large quantity of sediments in the caves had been carried away by undercurrents during the process of mining, abrupt subsidence could occur easily in the region. There are thousands of coalmines in China and every mine has the possibility of incurring significant human and property damages due to the random geological problems induced by the mine itself. In that instant, I realized that geology is by no means a tedious natural science. Instead, it is a branch of learning that can contribute to the concerted development between man and natural resources and environment. I constantly congratulate myself that by studying geology I have tempered my character in addition to acquiring useful knowledge. This serves as the source of further inspiration and confidence in my scaling new heights both in my future academic studies as well as in my future career objective.

The “new heights” as mentioned here not only refer to those basic issues that still remain unresolved in geological studies such as the issue of the origin of planets, the issue of providing rational explanations of geological phenomena, and the issue of achieving a harmonious co-existence between man and Nature. They also refer to the new subjects and challenges that geologists face in this age of rapid development of science and technology, including the shortage of energy resources, the forecasts of geological catastrophes, the integration of geoscience with social sciences, the popularization of the knowledge in geoscience, and the basic geological education. The systematic four-year undergraduate trainings in geology that I have received have familiarized me with the advanced geological knowledge and research findings in foreign countries. They have also made me keenly aware of many existing inadequacies inherent in China’s geological studies. It is under such circumstances that I have made up my mind to pursue further studies in the United States, a country that plays a leading role in many aspects of scientific research, including the research in geology. Such a decision is made not only out of academic considerations. It is also imperative that a successful geological researcher must be exposed to broad geological perspectives. Pursuing further studies abroad can bring me good opportunities to broaden my horizon and enrich my experiences. Cornell University (The University of X X X ) enjoys high prestige in geological research, with its first-rate faculty, advanced experimental facilities and a competitive academic environment. It also offers many project-oriented opportunities for geological practice. In some sense, such a university will become a strong “foothold” for me to ascend onto new academic heights. In my prospective studies, I would like to focus on volcanology, mineralogy, petrology, and economic geology. Upon completing my degree program, I will return to my native country to commit myself to a lifelong career as a geological researcher and as a university teacher.

Just as many geological puzzles are still mysterious, it is uncertain whether my application will be accepted or not. Similarly, while the task of geologists is to know the unknown, I cherish the unswerving belief of pursuing my objective – the long-dreamed aspiration to experience the great geological significance of the Grand Canyon.

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