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Grade: 12

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Once, I asked my dad: "Why do you want me to study the medical field?"; "Because we see some relatives doing it, and they make good money," he said. Coming to a new soil created a fear for both of my parents. As they started over again from scratch in the new country, they feared that my generation could not succeed and all the sacrifices they made would become failures. So we got pushed to professional careers with secured job opportunities. At the time, I felt trapped. I was trapped in a heavy burden of expectations that made it so difficult for me to communicate with them: "This is not what I want."

Entering high school during the pandemic year was difficult for me, as many clubs were inactive during hybrid learning. I tried to be a good student in class but always felt like something was missing in my high school career. I joined JROTC, encouraged by my parents, but still, I felt unfulfilled. Therefore, I made my first decision based on my own interest to explore the Future Business Leaders of America program, which helped me discover my interest in business-related fields. However, my dad showed no excitement and was extremely frustrated. Before departing, there was a note from him: "You are not going to make it." I wasn't surprised by the non-support; a girl in a business is crazy, even madness, for our family culture. Still, I went for it. At the award ceremony night, my heart skipped a beat when my friend tapped hard on my shoulder and told me my name was on the board. My analysis project placed me in the top 10. I stood up and ran toward the stage as my second presentation was also awarded and further qualified for the nationals.

Joining FBLA has been an incredible journey for me to pursue personal growth, boost my confidence, and expose me to many broader programs in partnership with this organization. I had the opportunity to become an innovator at The Knowledge Society. This international academic training program accelerated my knowledge in various topics related to business, technologies, and problem-solving. At TKS, I discovered a financial technology-blockchain that transformed traditional bookkeeping to a secure data block system that is computed. Although technology has always been controversial, with concerns about it taking over human jobs, I was drawn to its potential efficiency for collaboration with humans. As I researched further, I discovered that many companies were exploring this technology to enhance the security of crypto trade platforms and provide faster transaction lines. I wondered if this could be a valuable tool for small businesses to grow and compete. The more I explored this field, the more excited I

became to conduct hands-on research and experiment with this technology. Throughout these valuable experiences, I saw myself develop discipline and become more self-assured over time to speak up for my desire. That is when I knew I wanted to pursue a degree in business and finance.