

Two million minutes. Two million minutes to discover who I am, to decide what to do with the rest of my life. When phrased as such, it seems like a lifetime. But in reality, the four years of high school seem to pass in the blink of an eye. Here I stand, over one million minutes spent, and still discovering who I am and what part I will play in the world. Fourteen thousand minutes on an EF tour to China will open my eyes to other cultures and prepare me to step up and take my place in the global community.

The world we live in today is one that is linked by technology. It is nearly impossible not to be constantly connected with people, whether through phones, the internet, television, or the radio. With the ability to instantly communicate around the world, global interaction is becoming increasingly important. We are so connected to other nations that it is impossible not to become embroiled in their conflicts, thus diplomacy becomes all the more necessary. Diplomacy imbues top headlines as the United States reaches its concerns beyond its own borders: imposing sanctions attempting to contain Iran's nuclear power, sending additional troops into Afghanistan, giving aid and supplies to help rebuild Haiti. As one of the most wealthy and successful nations, it is our duty to become involved in the wellbeing of other countries, something that technology facilitates. Organizations like NATO, the WHO, and the United Nations work towards this, but collaboration between nations must go beyond large, impersonal institutions. Cross-cultural exchange must exist between ordinary citizens to destroy animosity between nations and foster a global community. Nations will only respect each other if their people respect each other, and respect is the first step to cooperation. EF cultivates this by enabling students to become immersed in a different culture, breaking down barriers at a key age. Through the EF Global Citizen Scholarship, I hope to take this opportunity myself.

I live in my own sphere of influence, a community that doesn't span much past the borders of the tiny state of Rhode Island. Living in Rhode Island brings new meaning to the phrase "it's a small world." The smallest state, Rhode Island is unique to any other part of the country. It's impossible to go anywhere without running into some distant connection and you're not a true Rhode Islander if you can't tell the difference between a Cranstonite and a Cranstonian or place a person within a mile of their home simply by their accent (though it all sounds the same to outsiders).



Educational Tours

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Growing up in Rhode Island has simultaneously sheltered and stimulated me. The state is its own society, a community in which the business of the state is first and foremost on its citizen's minds. As a child, it was impossible to imagine anything further than the ramparts of the Newport Bridge; beyond was a vast, dauntless wilderness reserved only for adventurous family vacations. But things changed as I grew up. Education opened me to the enormity of the world. Suddenly, I couldn't be content with my comfortable community. I craved more. I craved to see and feel and experience the world, to immerse myself in things completely foreign to what I had known. The more I learned, the stronger the urge became. I lapped up knowledge like a sponge, dreaming of the day when it would be tangible to me. I wanted to see the landmarks depicted in textbooks, to touch the walls of cathedrals, temples, and monuments, to stand in the very places history had been made.

The dream became a possibility when my sister Gina participated in an EF tour to Spain and Portugal the summer of 2009. Gina returned home after two weeks away, glowing with excitement. My family sifted through her pictures and stories and souvenirs, listening as she recounted every detail of the trip with as much vigor as if she were living it again. For her, it had been the experience of a lifetime, and I eagerly dreamed for the day that it would be my turn. However, though I had planned to attend an EF tour sponsored by my school, my family's financial situation prevented me from traveling like my sister had. I was sorely disappointed but the situation was beyond my control. Despite this I still hoped for the chance to travel. Now, the Global Citizen Scholarship is giving me that chance to discover on my own, beyond history textbooks and language classes, the culture of a place half-way around the world.

Fourteen thousand minutes. Fourteen thousand minutes spent in a country on the other side of the globe, far beyond anything I have ever known. An EF tour to China will expand my way of thinking. By stepping outside of my own country I can discover diplomacy in practice and experience global citizenship in the most personal way. I will have the chance to interact with students my own age who share similar ideals regarding global citizenship but also be opened to entirely different views. Building relationships with foreign students will equip me with communication skills that can't be learned in the confines of one's own borders. With so much diversity, debates will be diffused by the ability to compromise and the desire to learn. The students I meet will be so divergently different that

even the simplest of conversations will be eye-opening.

Chinese is a culture alien to me. As a communist nation, it is in many ways opposite of the capitalist society with which my heritage is rooted. The strict discipline and academic superiority often heard about in China leads to certain stereotypes, stereotypes I hope to look past by building personal connections. The experience will impart me with new views on the world. I'll return home with the knowledge needed to break down barriers of race and ethnicity and the leadership skills to succeed. Only by being immersed in the culture of China can I truly grasp what its people have to offer to the world.

But this trip is more than my own personal discovery. Though I will be meeting students from around the world, I cannot forget that they will be meeting me. I must represent America's potential in the modern world, and must lead others to discover my culture the way I discover theirs. There is a spirit in Americans that isn't found anywhere else, a fierce American pride, and a vehement allegiance to the creed I can be who I want to be. I can dare to dream any impossibility. I can do it. Americans have so much potential to contribute to the world, potential that is only enhanced by our foreign relations. The same can be said for the Chinese: together, we are doubly strong. Though American ideals are fueled by capitalism while Chinese, communism, it is immaterial to say that one is right and the other wrong when both supply something unique to the world. This tour to China will show me how to lead in collaboration. Leo Tolstoy once said, "I know that my unity with all people cannot be destroyed by national boundaries or government orders." These words, I believe, capture the essence of EF tours.

That same American spirit fills me now and makes me believe that I can impact the global world because I have the ambition to try. Though I may feel insignificant at the moment, I've been taught to take the initiative, taught that change is not made by waiting. Change is made by doing. EF's tour to China will expand my global view and better prepare me for that day when I do take hold of the reigns. It will open the door to opportunities for me to impact the future.

My dream has always been to be a doctor. Though I find the scientific aspect fascinating, something



else compels me to work in a hospital as opposed to a lab. Of all the careers I have envisioned myself in I am most stimulated by medicine because it unites the intellectual with the humanitarian. My talents and the benefits of my education could be used to better the human race. As the kind of person who feels the need to make a difference, to be significant, the American spirit does not content me to mediocrity. I am a member of the global community; therefore, I am responsible to help carry the human race.

How will the EF Global Citizen Scholarship aid in my dreams of a career in the medical field? The answer lies not in the profession I aspire to but rather the use I plan to make of it. My dream extends much further than the hallways of a quiet, small-town hospital. Recently, I read the novel *Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Paul Farmer. The book recounted the life of Paul Farmer, a successful doctor, and his work in the impoverished countries of Haiti and Peru. I was inspired by the way Paul Farmer used a career he loved and a subject he was passionate about to address the needs of his current society. His life was further evidence that humanitarianism isn't a specific duty limited to trucking food and supplies in and around destitute nations. Making a difference on the global level is something that incorporates, and is in fact fueled by, individual dreams and aspirations. It is possible to pursue one's ambitions and simultaneously use them to the benefit of others. When I think about what I want to be, it isn't just a doctor. My dreams continue to migrate beyond my nation's borders, and I think of working with the World Health Organization, Doctors without Borders, or another similar program. The EF Global Citizen Scholarship can open the door to work in other nations, as well as show me what it means to interact with other cultures. It can prepare me to travel to countries ravished by earthquakes and tsunamis or widespread epidemics and deal not just with the nation's problems, but with its people.

Less than one million minutes to go. Less than one million minutes until I leave my sheltered home, leave my school, leave my comfortable niche in my community and embark on something much larger. I'll be independent for the first time, and swarmed by new ideas and innovative concepts. It will be then that I must bring my national heritage, my American pride, my small-town origins, to the global level. It will be then that I will use my experiences to fuel something far bigger than myself. And it will be my time, my turn, to make a difference. EF can lead me in that endeavor.