

**FODARA Scholarship Winners from De Anza College  
June 2015 Recipients**

**De Anza 3 @ \$1,000**

**1. Jeffrey (De Anza)**

**Major: Biological Sciences**

**My Story**

I have two distinct career paths in mind: to become an agricultural research scientist or a university professor who introduces students to the fascinating world of biology. During my years in De Anza College, I found great interest in all aspects of biology. Specifically, I am intrigued about the molecular machinery of the cell which it uses to perform essential tasks of sustaining life. These macromolecules are so intricately built and “designed” by the cell that I often doubt its very existence. As a research scientist, I would be able to explore those mechanisms in depth to advance current understandings whereas, as a professor, I would have the chance to share my passion with the next generation scientists.

I have taken several approaches to acquaint myself with these career paths. Currently, I work in the Plant Biology Department of Carnegie Institution of Science under the supervision of Yongxian Lu, a plant reproduction specialist. The lab is a great opportunity to challenge my passion on the subject because it is very labor intensive and time consuming. I have been working approximately 15 hours a week for over half a year and still find that the time spent there insufficient to finish my main project. In short, I am in charge of fetching specific pieces in a BAC library to reconstruct a portion of the genome of teosinte, a close relative to domestic corn.

Despite the hard work, one of the most rewarding moments of doing research is discovering results that are unknown to anyone else in the world. I had a side project where I was asked to genotype hundreds of plants to find a homozygous mutant. The process took almost a month and I finally got a plant that was highly suspected to be my target. At that time I have already genotyped over 200 plants. Because of the excitement, I decided to stay extra late in the lab to confirm the results. Time went by fast and before I knew it, it was dark and I was the only one left in the lab. These moments are what motivate me, all the hard work coming to an end which yields something quite rewarding. My finding may be insignificant to a professional researcher but I believe that it is my first step towards becoming a scientist.

I chose to focus on agricultural research because I have seen its strong influence on the society. One of scientists I wish to work with in the future is Jorge Dubcovsky, a wheat geneticist who developed several new variations of wheat which benefited third-world countries who suffer from famine. Advancing agricultural studies is the answer to feeding the ever-increasing world population. People like Dr. Dubcovsky spend a lifetime studying what he has interest in while benefitting the society and I, too, wish to pursue a similar career.

Moreover, I have been trying to read research papers written within the field to gain a better understanding of recent findings and the work done by actual researchers. I usually find it simple to understand the abstract and what questions they wish to answer but I have had great difficulty understanding their methods and techniques used. I have tried asking college professors for help but the topics are often too specific for them to understand so I was faced with the challenge alone. I figured that I can either increase my knowledge in the subject on my own or ask the authors of the research papers directly. Therefore, I started to audit upper division classes and take Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) in genetic analysis and molecular biology. Although these classes weren't directly focused on plant biology, a lot of the concepts are similar and thus can be comparable.

Overall, I believe that it is my responsibility to deepen my understanding of the career I am interested in pursuing in order to minimize the differences between my expectations and reality. During the process, there is no doubt that there have been knowledge gaps. The road ahead is harsh and full of challenges thus making it more important for me to continue exploring and preparing myself to achieve my career dreams.

## **2. Haris (De Anza)**

**Major: Liberal Arts/Business**

### **My Story**

Growing up in a war torn country, I never once could've imagined that I would have the opportunity to live in a country with paved roads and upright standing buildings. Going to college was something to only dream about and not even imagine. Looking back, some 14 years have passed since my family and I first stepped foot into the United States, and since then some of my dreams have become a reality. My parents and 3 siblings are part of a supportive and loving group of people that have been there for me through all the good and bad memories the last 14 years have brought. I can't help but heap further praise to my parents for being brave enough to pack up the very little belongings they had and travel halfway around the world to an unknown land, all so they could give their 4 young children a shot at a better life. Each of them has worked multiple minimum wage jobs over the past 14 years in order to help keep a roof over our heads, and food on the table. Quite frankly, they're my main motivation to finish college and become successful in life. Even when I've had strenuous 7:30 am classes that I need to wake up at 6 am for to become prepared, their past sacrifice and determination gave me the energy to keep marching forward. They've always taught me to work hard for the things you want most in life. Ever since I've stepped foot onto the De Anza campus, I've done everything in my power to do just that; work hard. I'm currently involved with multiple organizations on campus. From being an active member in Phi Theta Kappa and multiple other clubs on campus to being Vice President of Fundraising for the De Anza College Honors Program. I've also done my best to help out on campus where help may be needed.

In the spring of 2014, I got the opportunity to interview for an English tutoring position open at De Anza College's Writing and Reading center; I took the opportunity knowing that as an immigrant child, I had a lot of trouble grasping the English language and had very few people there to help me which made everything that much harder. I really

didn't want anybody to go through the struggles that I experienced while learning the English language. That's one of the main reasons why I wanted to become (and eventually did) a college level English tutor.

My older sister is another amazing individual that I look up to on an everyday basis. She was the first member of our family to get her college diploma and was always (still is) there for me when I need love or an extra boost of support. Having double majored at San Jose State in Human Resource Management and Business Management, she was the main contributor to my renewed interest in Business Administration. Specifically speaking I would love to pursue my passion for the Accounting side of business and to hopefully get a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Accounting.

I'm currently looking into potentially landing an internship at one of the big 4 accounting firms, and to eventually apply for a permanent position upon graduating from college. To gain more experience within the Accounting profession, I've also recently become an Accounting tutor at De Anza College's General Subjects center. From a young age, my dad has always encouraged me to run my own business one day and I have made it my personal long-term goal to have my own business by the age of 30.

### **3. Hanh (De Anza)**

#### **Major: Business**

#### **My Story**

I started college one year ago after my family had moved to the United States from Vietnam. I had to face the problems of not knowing the language or how the education system worked. I felt alone. Everything was different from my country. I could not express myself with the people around me. Often I felt frustrated. Many people told me that graduating would be hard for me because I did not know the language and was just starting to learn English. Instead of being upset about this comment, it motivated me to study hard and to get good grades. I am currently enrolled in my ninth quarter as a full time student in Business Administration. I have maintained the overall GPA of 3.83 and the major GPA of 4.00. Moreover, I am proud of myself for getting almost A in writing classes because English is not my native language, so I have had to put a lot of effort in improving the writing skill every day. I always believe that diligence is the mother of good fortune. My incessantly effort is recognized and awarded by an invitation to become a Writing and Reading tutor sent from the Student Success Center at my college. They said that I was receiving this invitation because I had done well in my writing class at De Anza College.

Besides the academic challenges, I also have some finance problems. My family has five people. I have two younger brothers, one in high school, and one in college. Although my parents are currently employed, they are in low class salary earner, with a total income of Thirty-six thousand for a year (\$36,000/ year). My whole father's monthly salary is spent on monthly rent. My mother's salary is spent on food, gas, electricity and others. This salary scheme made feeding and accommodation be more difficult to be combined with my education. This condition makes my family poor and indigent.

However, my family had a large part in my achievements in high school and continues to be a source of motivation in my achievements in college. I am the first one to graduate from high school and to attend college in my family. This was another thing that motivates me to continue my education through college. I want very much to make my parents proud of me. My family encourages me to be part of activities at school and in the community. Although I was involved in many activities in high school, here at De Anza College, I find that it is harder for me to be involved in extracurricular activities, because my class schedule does not allow it and I have to take the bus 21 miles in 2 hours to commute from school to home. But I would like to join some organizations like Vietnamese Students Association and Alpha Sigma Alpha Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa.

Because of my parents' love and sacrifice over the years, I have been able to devote the time and energy necessary to academic accomplishment even though money has always been tight. In addition to focusing on my own studies, I also worked as a math and science tutor throughout my years in high school as a way of contributing to my family's budget. I am working as Clerical Assistant at De Anza Bus/Computer System Division. Working as a Clerical Assistant helps me have experience working with office equipment such as telephones, faxes, computers, copiers, mail, files and public contact with students, staff or the public. As you know, a college education is quite expensive, but it is an investment that is certainly worthwhile. I now have an opportunity to become the first person in my family to attend college, though I'm in need of financial assistance to realize what has been a long-term goal for me and a dream for my parents.

I had worked hard most of my life academically. I put so much effort in anything I choose to do, or any task accorded to me. My goals in life are often extremely high. I base my goals on the quote "Be like a postage stamp. Stick to one thing until you get there." When I set goals for myself, I do everything in my power to achieve them, and if I happen to fall short of my goals in life, I take pride in myself knowing that I did my best. Furthermore, I have a clear idea in mind of what I aspire to do with my life, and that makes everything much easier for me. Five years from now will be 2019. At that time, I will graduate and possess the Master of Business Administration at the Cal Poly. Then I will look for a job in a company as a Financial Analyst position. At the same time, I will try to learn and earn the Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) designation. CFA can help me enhance my career potential up to managerial level. If I didn't make career choice in finance field, I would try to start up a business like owning a bakery; it's related to my hobby. I love baking and decorating cakes. Moreover, I also love animal, so I want to become an officer or even a president of World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). I want to speak up for animals and make a world of difference for animals.