L1. Statement of Purpose - Part I

Do not respond to this section until you have reviewed the **Statement of Purpose Guidelines** contained in the NSEP Scholarship Brochure. This section must be typed, maximum two typed pages including this page.

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**Organized Study Abroad Program**

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**Direct Enrollment in a Foreign University**

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**Individually Arranged Study**

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1. Why do you want to study abroad? What are your academic and career objectives for studying abroad and how do they compare to the NSEP mission and objectives? How will an NSEP scholarship help you meet your academic, professional, and personal goals? How will you address important global economic, political, and social issues affecting national security? How will you apply your studies upon returning to your home institution and in your internationally-related career?

Though it is possible to learn about another culture by reading about it or studying it in the classroom, I believe that it is impossible to truly understand a foreign culture without being surrounded by it and experiencing it first-hand. Although I have never been out of the United States, I believe that a shared perspective gained through experience is necessary to real cross-cultural understanding. I feel strongly that by spending a year in Russia, I will be able to complement the academic knowledge of that country I have already acquired. Furthermore, the practical experience gained by spending a year in Russia will allow me in the future to play a more significant role in the constantly growing interaction between Russia and the United States.

My goals in terms of academics and a career are centered on becoming a specialist in the affairs of the former Soviet Union. Upon completing my undergraduate degree, I plan to pursue an advanced degree in Political Science, focusing on the security issues confronting the former Eastern Bloc, and particularly, Russia. My career objective is to work for either the United States government as a Russian specialist or for an international organization such as the United Nations in a similar capacity. My specific interests are centered on Russia’s relationships with the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia – the one-time Soviet sphere of influence – and the implications for Russian foreign and security policy.

By spending a year studying in Russia, I hope to develop an advanced competency in the Russian language, such that I will be able to analyze political documents and have the ability to communicate effectively with native speakers. In addition, I look forward to the opportunity to build close contacts with host families from vastly different regions of Russia, thereby advancing my knowledge beyond the macropolitical level to that of individuals confronted by rapid change. Moreover, by participating in a program which includes academic study in different areas of Russia, I hope to be able to understand more fully the social and historical forces, in particular the impact of cultural and regional diversity, which have shaped the political status quo and which will continue to have a profound effect on Russia’s evolution. In a country as large and diverse as Russia, I believe that it is only through in-depth experience of a wide variety of specific cultures and traditions that one can attain the breadth of understanding necessary to truly know Russia and her people.

As Russia undergoes a profound political, social and economic transformation, it will be vital to have specialists fully acquainted with the panoply of ideas which accompany these changes. Though no longer seen as a potential mortal enemy of the United States, Russia, based on her sheer size and geographic location alone, is a world power with whom the United States must deal on a constant basis. From nuclear disarmament to stability in the Middle East, it will be vital for the United States to be able to comprehend and to work with Russia. With the end of the Cold War has come an opportunity to re-examine some of the long-held...
assumptions about Russia, and in the process identify and work towards shared interests. With the transition to a market economy, Russia of the not too distant future also appears to hold vast new opportunities for entrepreneurs, and the United States can not afford to sit on the sidelines while others take advantage of these opportunities. None of these opportunities, however, geopolitical or strictly economic, can be achieved without knowledge and insight into Russia’s complexities.

I have tried to attain the greatest possible understanding of Russia without actually visiting it as a student. I am majoring in International and Area Studies with an emphasis on Russia and Eastern Europe, and have studied the Russian language for three years. My minor is in Political Science with an emphasis on international relations and comparative political systems. I have also tried to take advantage of other experiences I have had, and one that is relevant to my study of the former Soviet Union, was an Honors Seminar taught by former US Ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack Matlock. Focusing on the reasons for the USSR’s demise, this seminar was one of my initial steps in gaining a larger perspective on the challenges (internal as well as external) confronting modern Russia and in piquing my interest in this part of the world.

In addition to my academic involvement with the issues confronting the former Eastern Bloc, I have been and remain active in different cultural groups. I have been especially involved with the Russian Club at the University of Oklahoma, an organization whose mission is both to improve members’ competency in the Russian language and to build contacts between American and Russian students at the university. Participating in the Russian Club has been a particularly rewarding experience, as I have come to know several students from the former Soviet Union and learn from them about their pasts. Several of these students have given me the privilege of listening to them discuss their beliefs, hopes, and fears for the future of their homeland. I have also participated in OU cousins, the University of Oklahoma’s international student support program. The knowledge I have gained from these experiences has only strengthened my desire to see for myself the rapidly evolving way of life in modern Russia.

Upon returning to the United States, I will spend one semester completing my BA at the University of Oklahoma, and then either apply immediately to graduate school or enroll in a program to teach English abroad for one year. Either way, I will then pursue a graduate degree in Comparative Politics, maintaining my emphasis on Russia and Eastern Europe. My ultimate aim is to possess the academic and practical knowledge necessary to embark on a career with the United States government (as a Foreign Service Officer) or with an international organization, while still having the capacity to teach at the university level. Spending a year abroad will, I believe, give me the practical knowledge of Russian society that is a prerequisite to understanding the political and security issues facing Russia today.

No amount of classroom instruction can replace the experiences gained by spending a year with a diverse group of people. Rather, the opportunity to spend a year abroad is a means of bringing to life what is already known and fostering the sort of understanding which one must have in order to operate successfully in a rapidly evolving world
L2. Statement of Purpose - Part II

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1. Describe in detail the nature and location of your proposed courses of study (include both preferred and alternate programs), the structure of the program (classes, independent projects, specific amount of formal language study per week, other academic subjects studied), how regional cultural activities are integrated in your study abroad program, and why you have chosen these particular programs. List specific objectives you realistically hope to accomplish while abroad, and indicate how attainment of these objectives will contribute to your future academic and career plans. Why do you feel qualified to pursue this program of study? What administrative support is available in your proposed program (facilities, resident director, housing, etc)?

I have applied to the program “Russia as She Is: Academic Year Program” sponsored by the Virtus Institute. This yearlong program focuses on improving fluency in the Russian language through intensive coursework in both language and other academic disciplines (taught in Russian), as well as through residence with host families. The courses are offered for four to six weeks at a time at different universities in Russia. I believe that the variety of courses offered is one of the most important attributes of this program, and will permit me to gain knowledge of a wide variety of subjects in the context of their relevance to modern Russia. Furthermore, by scheduling courses throughout the country, this program emphasizes the acquisition of first-hand knowledge of Russia’s diversity. I find this feature of the program attractive, because, as a person who aspires to become a specialist in Russian affairs, I believe that the wide geographic scope of the Virtus Institute’s program is a necessary component in achieving a much more thorough appreciation of Russia and her people. Just as a person who has merely visited New York cannot say they “know” the United States, it is equally true that experiencing only Moscow, for example, is insufficient for acquiring a deep and comprehensive understanding of Russia. Moreover, course material covers more than just the traditional subjects, including topics such as folklore, art and architecture, as well as topics specific to the region of each university. The comprehensiveness of the program’s subject matter will further facilitate the acquisition of in-depth knowledge and an appreciation of the subtleties of Russian life.

Grades are given at the completion of each four or six week term and are based upon homework (60%) and a final exam given at each university (40%). In addition, the program requires the submission of a separately graded “capstone paper” designed to integrate the knowledge gained throughout the program at the end of the year. Each university attended in Russia will issue a transcript with grades for each session. Throughout the year, students live with host families in the seven cities visited, facilitating available at all times. The organization of the program is as follows:

Four Weeks in Nizhni Novgorod (Nizhni Novgorod State Architectural and Civil Engineering Academy):
The first session of the year is designed primarily to improve Russian language skills. Twelve hours and 30 minutes per week are spent in the classroom studying Russian. Additional classes include: Russian History (From “the Beginnings” to Peter the Great), Government Systems and Institutions, Survey of Russian Economics, and Survey of Russian Art and Architecture, each for three hours per week class time; plus Economics, Literature, and Religion in Russia, each for ninety minutes per week of class time. The language classes focus on increasing vocabulary in order to understand lectures in other academic subjects, and are subdivided into sections comprising: Conversation, Writing and Grammar; Phonetics; and Mass Media.

Four Weeks in St. Petersburg (St. Petersburg Electrotechnical State University):
Language study comprises six hours per week in the classroom, and includes the same subsections as in Nizhni Novgorod, with the addition of a subsection titles “Film: Vocabulary and Interpretation.” Other classes are: Art/Architecture in St. Petersburg and History (Peter the Great to World War I), each for three hours per week, Literature for four hours and 30 minutes per week, Government Structure and Function and Religion & Politics, both for 90 minutes, plus Current Economic Trends for an average of 135 minutes per week of class time. The St. Petersburg session also includes two guest lectures. The language component in St. Petersburg is focused on “reinforcement of the new, specialized vocabularies acquired during lectures.”