



## UC San Diego Chancellor's Scholars Program

### International Study Scholarship

Sponsored by Henry Powell & Mary Johnson Powell



### **SHARON NI**

Major: Cognitive Science: Machine Learning & Neural Computation  
Cohort Year: 2022  
Plans to study abroad in Summer 2025

I was five months old when I took my first plane ride.

Without the financial capacity or time to properly raise me, my parents left me in the care of my grandparents. While they worked tirelessly for the American Dream, I spent the first four years of my life in my parent's home country of China, learning about their

culture and upbringing. When I was four, I took my second plane ride back to California—the place where my parents strived to start a new life.

These experiences at a young age allowed me to become acutely aware of the personal growth that occurs with travel. Living in China, I learned the importance of respect for the elderly, the custom of handing out red envelopes on Chinese New Year, and the culture and joy of square dancing. When I moved back to America, I learned about diversity, the power of free speech, and the culture of small talk. All this knowledge informs my values today, playing a vital role in shaping me into the person I am. With opportunities for studying abroad in college, I am eager to seek unique experiences and explore new cultures that will influence my development as a student and an individual.

While I am excited to make discoveries about myself and the world, traveling has always been a luxury for my immigrant family. Therefore, scholarships would immensely support the exploration of my passions, and I am grateful for the opportunity to apply to Dr. Ruth Covell's International Study Scholarship. With the support of this scholarship, I hope to participate in an Education Abroad Program where I can broaden my knowledge in cognitive science, specifically machine learning. As cognitive science is a field that draws from multiple disciplines, including psychology, linguistics, philosophy, and more, I wish to gain theoretical perspectives from people of different backgrounds that offer new insight into these areas of thinking. I also intend to build my professional network abroad by making connections and learning from leading researchers and professionals in the field. Furthermore, with machine learning being a rapidly evolving field, innovations are constantly emerging; studying abroad would allow me to gain exposure to these techniques and approaches that may be less prominent in the US.

Apart from developing my academic career abroad, I hope to explore and immerse myself in new cultures to appreciate the diversity of the human experience as I discover the customs, beliefs, and values of people from different parts of the world. I believe this exposure to new environments would help me gain a more nuanced understanding of the world and broaden my perspectives. Upon return, I am excited to be a reflection of all the knowledge I gained, all the values I adopted, and all the challenges I overcame. Given my eagerness and determination, I am confident that a study abroad experience would be an invaluable journey of personal growth and academic development, and I would be beyond thankful for the opportunity

