



## UC San Diego Chancellor's Scholars Program

### Dr. Ruth Covell International Study Award Award Recipient - 2021



**Denise Trieu**  
**2018 Cohort**  
**Sixth College**  
**Human Biology**

**Plans to Study Abroad Spring 2022**  
**Global Cities Urban Realities:**  
**Multi-site Program in London & Paris**

When I was in the fourth grade, my grandfather lost his vision as he didn't have access to proper eye care in his small hometown of Huê, Vietnam. I wanted nothing more than to clear up his vision, but knowing I couldn't, I set my eyes on changing it for others in the future.

As I grew older, my affinity towards the eyes only evolved, and I was enamored by the sciences and concepts behind the field. Nevertheless, my path towards a future in optometry was not paved for me. Coming from an immigrant family, living paycheck by paycheck, I had no one to look towards throughout my academic ventures. At the same time, I held extra gravity on my shoulders; as the firstborn daughter to my immigrant parents, I was born to home their hopes and dreams. Most importantly, I believe in returning the love and effort to those who have endlessly supported me. This devotion to giving back to my loved ones has propelled me and carried me through the entirety of my life, and has moved to encompass beyond my family. My desire to help others has grown to embrace communities and individuals from underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds as my own, and thus, I strive to increase access to compassionate and culturally-understanding healthcare to patients.

Nevertheless, the lack of resources, connections, and information I had, in comparison to my peers, left me apprehensive of my future. However, I soon recognized that so many individuals across the globe cope with these same fears—fears brought about by scarcity of resources, aid, finances, and information, whether pertaining to education, careers, or health. I decided to harness my personal hardships and understanding of these adversities in order to provide understanding and empathetic communication and care to those I have the honor of helping. I have had the privilege of volunteering with organizations and communities, in which I have seen firsthand how culturally-understanding communication transcends differences and language barriers, and allows for genuine connection.

As such, for my final quarter at UCSD, I plan to study in both London and Paris, in which I will have the opportunity to further my understanding of diverse cultures and individuals, through courses that examine the relationship between health, urbanism, and policy, as well as the experiences of working-class immigrants, cultural representation in politics, and discrimination. As a pre-health, STEM student, taking these interdisciplinary courses, in settings very distinct from what I am acquainted with, will present me with the unique, and invaluable opportunity to expand upon my perspective and understanding of inequalities and the unparalleled experiences of people from across the globe. Health care and social issues are undoubtedly intertwined; thus, I believe exploring these social constructs, in tandem with meeting and connecting with diverse individuals from all backgrounds, will ultimately aid me in my desires to provide empathetic and culturally-sensitive care, and path to displace institutionalized socioeconomic, educational, gender, and cultural barriers for patients in the future.

Chancellor's Scholar's Program/Emeriti Mentor Program  
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