The first time I spent significant time away from home was the summer after sixth grade. I traveled to North Carolina with my mom where she dropped me off on a small farm in between the Black Mountains and Blue Ridge of the Appalachians. My dad had grown up attending this camp every summer of his childhood and going on to work as a counselor there during his college years. After months of convincing, he had talked my mom into letting me go for the three-week camp session. Run by the same family for over fifty years, Camp Celo welcomes sixty campers per session to partake in farm activities, hiking, swimming, and other classic summer camp activities. Getting dropped off, I knew nobody at this place and knew nothing of what to expect. I threw myself into this new experience and ended up loving my time at Camp Celo and coming back two years later for the senior camp version. Still today I believe those two camp sessions were the best three weeks of my life. Not since then have I had an opportunity to put myself in a brand new place, completely detached from my familiar life. I am applying now for study abroad to go back to this place of growth and independence.

While college has been a new experience to me, it is still very close to home. I grew up in Everett, just thirty minutes north on I-5 from the UW campus. I expected to change almost immediately upon coming to college, but that has not been the case. Still I go to the gym after school, I do homework after dinner, and I hang out with my friends on the weekends. Occasionally, I return home to Everett for a load of laundry or to talk to my mom. In short, college was not the culture shock I was expecting. This is why I have decided to study abroad so early in my college career.

I have always wanted to travel abroad for the experience of a different culture and in order to broaden my own perceptions. After middle school, I spent two weeks in China on a student delegation and know that this experience has had lasting effects on my desire to see other parts of the world. We were able to partner with a local middle school, so that in addition to experiencing the typical tourist sites we also were able to connect with locals and truly experience Chinese culture. This experience was incredibly eye opening and I hope to have another similar experience through UW study abroad.

I am applying to study in Montpellier at the Universite Paul Valery this summer. I chose this program for a number of reasons. I studied French in high school and while I only worked up to a minimal language understanding, I feel that my background in the language could serve me well in picking up course material and feeling more comfortable in a new place. Additionally through studying French, I developed an interest in the country itself. Living in Everett, the closest thing I got to history was the row of 1930s houses on north Colby. In France, and much of the rest of the world, history is all around you. This aspect of European culture is something that has always fascinated me and I know I could experience this in Montpellier.

I believe I am well qualified for this program. I have always been an independent, motivated person, which seems to be essential in succeeding while abroad. I have always been a diligent student and have continued to succeed at UW in the University Honors Program. I also know how to take care of myself in unfamiliar situations and have a growing curiosity for all this experience could provide for me. I know I will make the most out of this opportunity and represent our university well abroad. I believe that this experience will provide me with a new perspective on the world, and an even larger appetite for travel. My intended major is political science, and in recognizing the shrinking of our world, an appreciation for other ways of life will be extremely important in any field, especially government. I do not know exactly what I plan to do with my major at this moment; I am considering law school as a serious option. In any case, an abroad experience is invaluable in life, especially while I am still growing and deciding my future. I am so excited to have the opportunity to apply for this experience, and thank you for your consideration.