

## Statement of Purpose

Taegu, South Korea 1999, the first day of the spring semester had commenced at Yeungnam University. My Public Administration professor said, "If any of you are thinking about studying in the United States, why don't you study Gerontology? It is a field of study about aging. Korea, like the United States, is becoming a country of old people." His suggestion sent strong flashes of curiosity through my mind; I wanted to study in America.

It was difficult making the final decision to leave my roots to study in a foreign land. My parents initially were not in agreement with my decision to study far away from home. We are not a wealthy family, but instead a working class family with a small farm, raising a few crops. One of their fears was not being able to support me, and my three brothers and three sisters.

Fortunately I was not the only one in the family with wanderlust. My second oldest sister married an American when she was working in South Korea. They moved to America in 2000 where I joined them two years later, mostly for a trial visit. When I arrived they had a room ready for me. They told me that I was welcome to live with them, if I decided to attend school. After completing the English language courses it was time to come to select a major course of study. What should I do? The words of my Public Administration professor came back to me, "...why don't you study Gerontology...Korea, like the U.S., is becoming a country of old people." I too had formulated my own criteria for selecting a major. First, I would take a study that is uncommon in South Korea. Secondly, I would only pursue a course of study that after completion would give me the tools to potentially be helpful in the Korean community, if I stayed in the U.S., or be of benefit to the people of South Korea if I returned home. Third and equally as important, I would only study what I really wanted to do.

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“Introduction to Human Aging” was the first course I took at San Diego City College related to Gerontology. Now more than ever, I was convinced that Professor Park had given a worth while advice for any student coming to study in America. I am confident in myself knowing that choosing Gerontology is the right choice of study and an excellent course of study for me. City College was not easy. This was my first experience at taking college level course work in an environment where the language was “strange,” and I knew on one. English was a struggle; however, by the time I completed my third semester, I was on the Dean’s Honor List. I was exceedingly happy! I could make my education dream a reality in America!

The price for my selection began with two and a half years of general education in order to transfer to San Diego State University so that by the fall of 2004, San Diego State University became my new college campus. From this school one can earn a certificate, a Bachelor’s and a Master’s degree in gerontology. Studies were going well, and in time I became an active member in the Gerontology Student Association, becoming Vice President. During this time at State my self-confidence about my professional future in Gerontology continued to grow. At this time the first generation baby boomers are emerging as a radical demographic movement. The story is being repeated around the world. My fear is that our culture, society, economy, and politics are not prepared for the coming older adult population growth explosion, nor does this seem to be of much concern to government planners. There is much work to be done before the pending crisis becomes reality. Education is a key factor to meet this coming challenge head on, with some degree of control. One way to meet these emerging challenges is to educate the public and policy makers, which is why I have chosen Gerontology for my field of endeavor.

After fulfilling the Gerontology requirements at San Diego State, including internship experience over two semesters, at the Senior Community Center and Neighborhood House

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Association, I have decided that I want to study and delve more into the field of Gerontology, These places where I interned deal mostly with the very poor, and some homeless seniors. Focusing on “Aging Policy” the class I enjoyed most, I want to continue studying this at the Graduate level. Aging Policy is an important component in the scheme of things, in order to provide better services for more seniors. Although there are good policies in place for the aging population, they are not enough to cover the sharply increasing number of seniors and also older adults from minority backgrounds. I strongly believe that current policies for the aging population need renovation. Researching for a university granting a PhD in Gerontology, it seems that the University of Massachusetts Boston has a top quality program. I am happy that I can apply for my next educational journey here.

Obtaining a PhD in Gerontology does not mean working with older adults only. It means working with the young as well, because they are the emerging aging population. Working for a PhD degree would provide me with the necessary tools to work with younger and older populations, mass media, government agencies, and of course health care providers. A big task is to educate younger people in order to mitigate their negativity toward older adults. Unfortunately they do not see that as they live longer, from day to day, being an older person is just around the corner for them.

Upon getting my Ph.D., I will be more than qualified to work in a variety of agencies, but I also want to bring together a more broad understand of aging issues that affect all ages. It is my observation that too many younger people have very little respect for the old, and lots of negativity toward them. My research in the PhD program will allow me to explore these avenues, and will allow me to focus more sharply on multigenerational strategies for meeting the emerging challenges of this demographic transition. All of my family has generously supported

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me. I doubt they fully understand how deep my appreciation is for them, and all that they do for me. Their help is unforgettable. My participation in the program is not solely for me and my family but also a way of contributing back to society.