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Dear Omar, Charlotte, Nate and Ron,

I can't believe it's already been over 4 years since my first summer with the Southwestern Company. When I met Omar and Ron for the first time nearly five years ago, I had no idea what a life changing journey I was about to embark on.

I grew up in Vancouver, Canada, and as an only child, I was very sheltered and privileged. After I graduated from high school, I wanted to be more independent and decided to move down to Los Angeles to attend University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). During my freshman year, I was invited to a Southwestern informational session and three aspects of the program caught my eyes: experience, travel, and money. I was very excited about the program and immediately told my parents about the internship program. As most parents would, my parents worried at the idea of their only child travelling across the country, knocking on doors, living with strangers for 10 weeks. My dad objected to the program at first but after learning more about the program and its benefits, he reluctantly came on board and supported my decision. After coming home from my first summer, my parents noticed a drastic change in me and were happy to see that I had changed for the better. They fully supported my decision to return as a student manager the following summer.

My challenges for the first summer really started even before the summer began. As an international student in the States on a student visa, I wasn't allowed to freely work off campus. I met with my school counselor and he told me I wouldn't be able to work in the States with the UCLA team without violating my visa status. Both Omar and Ron, UCLA organizational leader and district sales manager at the time, were very helpful during this process and arranged me to work in Canada with Canadian university teams. While I was very nervous about joining a different team that I have never met, Nate, Canadian division district sales manager, reassured me that I would be in good hands with teams up in Toronto who had already started their summer program. I joined Simon Fraser University (SFU) team halfway through their summer and Charlotte, SFU organizational leader at the time, and Nate adopted me into their organization and treated me like one of their recruits. I was welcomed into the SFU team by new teammates and I still had UCLA teammates who were cheering me on from distance. Reflecting back now, my unique situation, which was challenging at first, set the foundation for successful two summers as I had already learned then how to be flexible and adaptable.

I finished both summers above average and saved over \$6,000 and \$12,000 my first and second summers, respectively. However, the most invaluable life skills I had learned from two summers were independence, confidence, and perseverance. Moving down to LA on my own, I thought I was pretty independent. It wasn't until I left the 'college bubble', I truly learned how to independent and stand on my own two feet. After completing the most challenging summer internship, I felt like I



could do anything. Sure enough, when I returned to campus the following fall, I applied for leadership positions at campus organizations that prior to these summers, I had felt like I wasn't good enough for. I learned to be goal-orientated and set goals to finish my degree in 3 years and 3 months, have a full time job offer upon graduation and pass all 4 parts of Certified Public Accountant (CPA) exam in 5 months.

After getting rejected at least 30 times a day for 10 weeks, I learned to never give up and to maintain a positive attitude through life's ups and downs. This skill became crucial when I started applying for jobs. I was an aspiring accountant and in fall 2008, I applied for summer internship with all national, regional and local accounting firms. My timing for job application couldn't have been worse following the financial crisis as job opportunities were scarce. Public accounting was the only industry that was hiring and the competition for those positions was fierce. As an international student, it was very difficult for me to convince the firms to hire me over other college students who had the exact same degree as me and who didn't require the firm to spend extra money and effort on a work visa. I was discouraged but I didn't give up and I finally landed an interview with KPMG, one of the Big 4 accounting firms. My interviewer looked at my resume and despite my resume containing various accounting-related leadership positions and qualified GPA, he wanted to know about the direct sales summer internship I did because it was something he hadn't seen on a resume before. After my interview, I was offered a summer internship with a full time position upon graduation. My interviewer became my performance manager at the firm and when I asked him later what he thought about me after my interview, he responded "I felt that if you could talk to that that many families in one summer and be successful at it, I could confidently put you in front of a client and trust that you can communicate clearly." Despite my GPA and degree qualification getting me into an interview, it was ultimately my soft skills that landed me with a much-sought after position.

I graduated early from UCLA as per my plan and became a licensed CPA. For nearly two years now, I've been working at KPMG in the audit practice. The communication and leadership skills I learned at Southwestern have been utilized frequently on my job. My job requires a lot of communication with key executives such as controllers, CFO, and CEOs who are often at least 20-30 years older than me. In a client service industry like audit, it is important to be able to articulate clearly with our client contacts. As such, the ability to read and connect to people of any age I learned from my two summers has proved invaluable. Every day on my job, I work in a team setting and the skills to lead by example and think positive have been crucial in succeeding at the firm. These are life skills I gained outside of classrooms and they have been more valuable than any money or grades I've earned.

As a member of the recruiting team at our firm, I attend various recruiting events to meet prospective candidates. Whenever a recruit asks me what can they do to set themselves apart from others in a tough job market, this is my answer: whatever you do during your time in college, do something that is different and will set you apart on your resume. For me personally, it was the Southwestern internship and I know I wouldn't be where I am today without it.

Big thank you to Omar, Ron, Charlotte and Nate who I helped me shape into the person I am today.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sunny Jin', is written over a horizontal line.

Sunny Jin
Audit Associate