The last one year was an eye-opening experience for me. This begun when I was informed that I had been chosen as one of the foreign exchange students from my school. At first, I was scared, as I was not sure what lay ahead because of the different way of life between Kazakhstan and the U.S. I knew that I had to confront challenges in everyday life that I had never experienced before. When I arrived, everything was new, and I had to adjust to life in a foreign place with a completely different culture and language. Although I had been utterly frightened, things turned better. For starters, my host family was simply awesome, from the moment they came to pick me up from the airport to the day I left, they treated me as part of their family, and they helped me adjust to the new life. Being on exchange was always an emotional rollercoaster; the moments that were good were not just okay, they were unique, amazing, and beautiful all in one. On the contrary, the sad moments truly felt like the end of the world; at times, I was hit by homesickness and occasionally went through depression; however, these ended when I took the initiative to go out and enjoy my amazing life. Having enjoyed the good and survived the bad moments of the year abroad, I returned home with a newfound self-understanding, strength, and confidence.

My experience in class was also amazing, although during the first days some students used to stare at me whereas others laughed because of the way I dressed. One of the students went far to point that my clothes were hideous while another asked me if I was a lesbian. Short skirts, short dresses, long heels, and designer handbags were considered trendy. I became fashion conscious and started wearing clothing that were somehow revealing to avoid the judging stares and rude words. I gained acceptance with time and even
became friends with some of the students who had previously ignored and ridiculed me. I learnt that I had to be open-minded to accept the new culture and make new friends in school so that my learning experience would be smooth. As for the classes, there were loads of independent assignments and studying; this was unlike Kazakhstan way of learning, which was teacher centered. It was difficult to access all the necessary information from the internet and library, but my newly found friends were ready to help me. My host family arranged for a tutor to help me with my studies. Am a first learner and by the end of the student exchange program, I attained good grades and was at the top of my class. Generally, my home and school experience in the U. S. turned out to be life changing, although there were obstacles here and there.

Looking back at my year in the U. S., it is hard to believe what I went through. All the memories are still vivid, as it was and still is my best year so far. My experience in the U. S. transformed me to a young adult with a more positive and broader insight of the world.