



GESM graduate gets top mark in worldwide test, receives scholarship in Germany

My name is Julianna Patricia Varga and I am a Filipina/Hungarian currently living in Munich, Germany. I grew up in Boracay Island in the Philippines. There, I went to Brent International School until sixth grade and moved to the Boracay European International School, a sister school of the German European School Manila (GESM), for the coming year. Following that, I received a scholarship from the German section of GESM and moved to Manila for the eighth grade.

I stayed with family in Manila and most of the time was spent living with my grandmother. We lived very close to GESM, so I would just walk to school. I really enjoyed my school life and at times even went to school on weekends to either review lessons or spend time with a friend. Reminiscing, I remember how difficult the first couple of years were. When I arrived, I could barely speak German and had to learn it in school, where I had extra individual language lessons. The first few years were difficult for me to participate during lessons. As a young child, I was often shy and nervous to raise my hand and join class discussions. However, the teachers at GESM encourage class participation and group work, so it makes it much easier for a new student to join in discussions and get to know their classmates better. Another advantage is that classes in GESM are pretty small, allowing the teachers to really focus on each student's questions and needs. Through the years, I managed to become more open while of course, simultaneously, learning the German language to a level of internationally accepted proficiency.

All in all I spent 5 years in GESM, in which my last two years consisted of doing the International Baccalaureate (IB) to acquire a bilingual IB diploma. During these two years, I had the opportunity to develop many of my skills – both in the theoretical and practical realm – especially in the sciences, languages and mathematics. This helped form basic and abstract knowledge for me, which is now applicable in all my university courses. The International Baccalaureate was an intensive program for me and surely



for other fellow students; however, if you are a diligent and determined student and can manage your time properly, it shouldn't be a problem. To further cope with a studious life, the IB was balanced out with CAS ("creativity, action, service") – a mandatory part of the programme that made sure each student was active in the sense of creativity, sports and service. This helped me find a harmony in my school life. I grew up thinking that education was merely theoretically based, so the International Baccalaureate was a certain shock for me in the sense that other things were required from the students. It helps keep one's self both mentally and physically healthy. This is one of the most significant things I learned from the IB program; and every time I study now, I try to maintain a balance by incorporating other activities in my life, such as exploring Munich with friends or learning languages in my free time. Furthermore, the IB programme also encourages students to think and act internationally minded. This really helps when planning to study abroad. It becomes much easier accepting and adapting to other cultures and beliefs as well as enlightens the possible culture shock.

Recently, with a DAAD scholarship, I began my Bachelor of Sciences in Biology in the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität of Munich. I was nominated

by GESM to apply for the "Stipendium für deutsche Auslandsschulen" (scholarship for German schools abroad) and with some luck and a lot of hard work, I received the scholarship for my 3-year stay in Germany. It's a wonderful scholarship with constant gatherings which really give you the opportunity to get to know your fellow scholarship holders and the DAAD team, who is also very caring and make sure your stay in Germany is not anything less than amazing. I'm very glad I am one of the 130 people around the world to receive the scholarship!

Currently, I am enjoying my studies in biology, especially botany. In the future, however, I plan on moving into the field of human medicine in order to incorporate my knowledge from biology to help people around the world by discovering new treatments and methods in medicine.

Julianna scored the equivalent of 1.0 in the German Abitur in her IB Diploma Programme exams.

The German European School Manila is an officially recognized German school abroad with both a German and an International branch. The school offers a K-12 programme which includes a German and International section for the following: Kindergarten and Pre-Primary, Primary School, (grades 1-5), Secondary school (grades 6-10) and a two-year international High School programme (IB Diploma Programme).