**Global Scholar Maria Rueda  
Preparing for College Career**

I was accepted into Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America ([LEDA](https://ledascholars.org/))\*, a five-week college prep program for students from underserved backgrounds, so I did not attend Mandarin Chinese camp last summer. With LEDA, I spent the summer at Princeton University taking classes such as college guidance and aspects of leadership with 99 other students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. I met many peers who study or know Mandarin there, and I practiced with them!! Before LEDA, I spent two weeks in Washington DC through other programs to learn about the federal government and develop a community project.

While I missed the in-person Mandarin camp component of the program during the summer, STARTALK (Part of the Chinese Scholars Program at Stanford University\*\*) is letting me finish the fall component. I resumed my weekly Mandarin classes and have continued practicing. In fall semester, I was also accepted as a National Security Fellow for [Girl Security](https://www.girlsecurity.org/) (a stipend is included!), so I am learning about the field of national security through virtual workshops and seminars!

In Immokalee, I have been involved with farmworker aid and civic engagement initiatives, and as a result of some of my efforts, I won some awards: the [Ham4Progress Award](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/news/announcing-2023-ham4progress-scholarship-winners), a cash award supporting college-bound high school students from communities that directly experience the consequences of injustice anddiscrimination, and the [Yale Bassett Award for Community Engagement](https://ritm.yale.edu/programs-partnerships/yale-bassett-award-community-engagement) (Award winners demonstrate a record of creative leadership and public service, academic distinction, interdisciplinary problem solving, and experience addressing societal issues that might include race and racism. Winners receive a book selected by the faculty of the Yale Center for the Study of Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration as well as a certificate of recognition).

From the Ham4Progress Award, I earned enough funds to buy my own laptop!!

Last spring semester, I finished my Contemporary U.S.-China Relations course through the [China Scholars Program](https://spice.fsi.stanford.edu/fellowship/china-scholars-program)\*\* and wrote my final research paper on "The Impact of the Hukou System on Migrant Children’s Education." Through my endeavors, I have discovered what I am most passionate about in international affairs -- its connection to human rights, migration, and labor!

Currently, I am taking classes at the Florida SouthWestern State College’s (FSW) Lee Campus full-time from Mondays to Thursdays. I hope to graduate high school with my Associate in Arts degree, or with at least a significant amount of college credits. At FSW, my favorite classes include Model United Nations, Arts and Cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean, and Research Analysis and Design. The MUN class at FSW fully funds a class trip to the collegiate Harvard MUN conference in February 2024. I am taking what I learn there back to my MUN team in Immokalee. Also, I was there at SHARKMUNC (at Gulf Coast High School’s Model UN competition), too. At SHARKMUNC, I was on the Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC).

Aside from academics, I now have my license and can drive! That being so, I would love to attend some NCWA lectures, especially the one on China.

Regarding college, LEDA is helping me come up with a college list. I am applying to Tufts, Georgetown, and most Florida public universities. Depending on the school's offerings, I am applying for either their international affairs or political science major.

I apologize for the long email; there is so much to share!

Best,

Maria Rueda

*\* Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America (LEDA) was founded in 2003 by Gary Simons, founder of New York City's highly regarded Prep for Prep program. It is now the preeminent national nonprofit organization dedicated to diversifying the national leadership pipeline by helping high-achieving students from under-resourced backgrounds gain admission to our nation's most selective colleges and supporting their success at these institutions.*

*Each year LEDA recruits a new cohort of scholars – 100 qualified high school juniors who show leadership potential but lack the exposure and support they need to attend highly selective colleges. They receive leadership training, writing instruction, standardized test preparation, and a year of highly personalized guidance as they navigate the application and admissions process at the most competitive colleges.*

*\*\* The China Scholars Program (CSP) is one of Stanford University’s virtual SPICE Programs in Pre-Collegiate Global Learning, running since 2004. Students will explore key issues in contemporary China, spanning politics, economics, social issues, culture, and the arts, and with an emphasis on its relationship with the United States.*

*The CSP selects about 20 exceptional high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors from throughout the United States to engage in a one-semester, intensive study of contemporary China. The experience offers a rare degree of expertise about China and its relationship with the United States and may significantly impact students’ future academic and professional careers.*

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