

June 19th, 2019

Barten Law P.C.,
Attn: Scholarship Department
1212 McCormick Ave.
Ames, Iowa 50010

Dear Barten Law P.C. Immigration Lawyers Scholarship Committee,

My challenges began at the early age of 7 years old. My sisters and I had just recently arrived in the United States, we had just been reunited with my parents who I had not seen in 3 years. At that time, we were living in a petite two bedroom apartment, which my parents had worked hard to pay off each month. My parents brought my siblings and I to the United States in order for us to receive better opportunities for education here in the U.S.. School had become a place where I had to learn to become independent and explore a whole new language. With all these sudden changes over such a short amount of time, I had to learn to put myself out there and not be afraid of change. I started school knowing no English, and starting out classes were very difficult for me because of the language barrier. My goal was to learn English so I could improve at school, better communicate with my classmates and get the help I needed from my teachers but most importantly, help my parents out when they needed help translating. I had seen how difficult it was for them to communicate and how much they tried, and after all they had sacrificed to get me to where I was. Helping them communicate was just a small favor in return that I could do for them to make their lives a little easier. I struggled for a couple years as I was learning as much as I could so I could catch on to the language as fast as possible. Surely, with time and a lot of practice helping translate for my parents, I was able to see continuous progress. I became fully proficient when I was in 5th grade. School became easier and I was getting the best grades I could.

Once I reached high school, teachers started talking about college and I began to worry, I knew I wasn't able to get a job, and I wasn't sure what my college plans would look like because of my legal status, my life wasn't like most high school teenagers. Thankfully, the DREAM ACT, also known

as DACA became an option, and my life became a little clearer. I was able to apply and was accepted, this permit opened so many doors in my life that I thought were never going to open. I was able to apply and get a job, apply to get a driving permit, and have the chance to attend secondary education. Although these opportunities did have restrictions, I was grateful for everything I was given that some don't think of as a big deal. This was a step in the right direction and I was not willing to waste it. I have learned to appreciate everything that has been given to me by my hard-working parents and that I have worked for myself.

As a freshman at Indian Hills I really enjoyed my time at college, but at times I had a hard time adjusting. In high school, I was very involved in school activities in the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps. (J.R.O.T.C). As I started out school, I was looking for possible extracurricular activities to join. I had heard of other colleges that had Latinx student organizations and the ways in which they help students adjust and become closer to their school and community. These Latinx student organizations provide resources to students and promote higher education as well as retention. As I continued to look for one at my own school, I came to realize that the school did not currently have one. As a sophomore student, I have decided to change this and help start one.

One of the personal reasons as to why I wanted to start this club happened at the beginning of my freshman year of college. I remember having trouble with my FASFA application at the beginning of the school year, and I knew it was because of my status as a DACA student. I went in and talked to one of the advisors who later transferred me to someone in the financial aid department to help solve the issues with FASFA. I already had an idea of what the issue was and that there wasn't much that could be done other than explaining to her that I was a DACA student and I wasn't able to receive financial aid from the government. I was once again reminded that I could not qualify for financial aid and had to find other ways of funding my education. She said this was the first time she had encountered a DACA student and didn't know how she could help me. I felt in a way helpless and vulnerable, and to this day I always keep that in mind, I do not want anyone else to every experience that feeling when they are in search for a better education. A Latinx based club could possibly open the doors for other students like me. Providing and arming students with resources as well as expanding their network to help future students with DACA. This club required an incredible amount of hard work, but I was motivated and willing to give it my all to push to get something started.

To do so, I talked to current English As a Second Language Coordinator at Indian Hills, and reached out to the Club Director, to help start a Latinx-based club at our campus. A club that can help the Latinx students within our community to feel closer to their soothers, meet other Latinx identifying students, and most importantly expand resources. Resources like scholarships that are available for all students, even DACAmented students like myself. I know how difficult it can be for non-U.S. citizens to find scholarships and funds for college; therefore a club with connections like this can benefit other students who have struggled as I have. I intended on getting this club started and getting other fellow students involved with developing the student organization. This club could also benefit high school students with future possible collaborations with the Al Éxito program at Ottumwa High School as well. This will not only help the students at college but also the students at the high school by encouraging and providing them with tools and knowledge about college.

My overall goal initially was and continues to be to continue to build this club at Indian Hills that helps give the resources necessary for success to the students while also making college life feel a little more like home to the Latinx students. This student organization could provide guidance with scholarships, school work as well and many other resources for students. Fun bonding activities could also be done and possible events could be planned for the school to learn more about diversity and the Latinx community. A student organization like this can immensely benefit and continue to help the students at Indian Hills for years to come, and thinking about that makes me feel excited to keep pushing for this plan to grow and become a reality.

Thank you for your time.

