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To: Mr. Guy Wildenstein
President
American Society of the French Legion of Honor

Re: Princeton in France Evaluation

As part of the Princeton in France program, I interned at the *Préfecture des Yvelines* in Versailles during the month of July 1998, and stayed in France for seven weeks from June 24 to August 12. The *stage* at the *Préfecture des Yvelines* in Versailles was an extremely interesting and valuable experience. However, it was necessary to work hard to make it so. I was placed in the *Bureau du Cabinet du Préfet* along with another intern from Princeton, Jenaro Cardona-Fox. Our direct supervisor was M. Dominique Brochard, *Chef du Bureau des Affaires Générales*, but we were ultimately responsible to M. Luc Petréquin, *Chef du Service du Cabinet*, and M. François Vuibert, *Directeur du Cabinet*. The only thing planned for us was a series of eight meetings spread out over the entire month with the heads of different offices at the *Préfecture*. These meetings were quite interesting and gave me the opportunity to speak, listen, and converse in French. Aside from these meetings, though, there was very little they had for us to do. For the first week and a half or so, Jenaro and I spent most of our time in a small room on the second floor studying documents which M. Brochard thought we would find interesting. When we asked for work to do, we were given documents to stamp, and, after that, a project which involved sorting through binders containing mountains of paperwork on all the *entreprises* in *les Yvelines*. Our job was to create a small binder full

of one page synopses on all the *entreprises*, including their name, location, activity, and number of employees. While this project was more interesting, I felt I still wasn't getting much out of the *stage* because I spent most of my time secluded in a room sifting through paper and speaking English to Jenaro instead of interacting in French.

After the first whole week I made more of an effort to roam around and converse with people, as well as more requests to M. Brochard for work which involved more responsibility and person-to-person contact. He was very understanding and receptive, and as a result I started performing more exciting jobs. I helped the *Bureau du Presse* put together the *Revue de Presse*, a summary of all news articles relevant to *les Yvelines* from more than a dozen sources. Soon, I was given the office of a secretary in the *Bureau du Presse* who had gone on vacation, and went to work on creating documents for the *Dossier Territorial*, a huge compilation of information about the *Département des Yvelines*, its demographics, economic situation, businesses and organizations, etc. M. Brochard, or his secretary, Mme. Florence Langlois, would give me folders of information to be summarized and put into a special form for the *dossier*, and occasionally a few documents to scan. Also, I was able to accompany a friend of mine, Benoit, who was doing his military service in the *Bureau des Rapatriés*, one day to the ANPE, the French unemployment agency, in order to see how the agency functions and to sit in on a few interviews with *chômeurs*. Towards the end of my *stage* I worked on creating a spreadsheet reference for all the businesses in the *département*.

The most enjoyable aspect of the *stage*, however, were the people with whom I worked. All of my superiors as well as the secretaries in the *Bureau du Cabinet* were really friendly and eager to learn about America and its differences with France. They were also patient and encouraging when I spoke French, and they helped me build confidence in my French as

well as corrected me when I made mistakes. I also made great friends with Jenaro, Benoit, and Emric, a French intern from *l'École des Sciences Politiques*. Every day we would take a long lunch at the *Restaurant Administratif*, which was subsidized by the government, and afterwards go to a café for a drink. The opportunity to converse with French natives of my own age was great because it was more relaxed atmosphere and served as a great education in contemporary French slang.

On the whole, the last three weeks of my *stage* more than made up for the anxiety and uncertainty of the first two. I learned a lot about the French administration, and my proficiency in speaking, understanding, and writing French improved immeasurably, to a point where I would speak instinctively in French even when someone spoke to me in English. This was my first time outside of the US, and the stage at the *Préfecture des Yvelines* provided the best possible initiation into France. During the weekends I was able to explore Paris and its surroundings, and after my stage ended I spent a week touring Bretagne and Normandy before returning to the US.

Prior to leaving for France, I had hoped that my experience would go beyond improving my French, gaining work experience, and learning first hand the workings of the French administrative system. The experience of being on my own, of having to rely completely on my own knowledge and resourcefulness, was a personal test I looked forward to and relished, and which made the trip that much more special. My eyes were opened to a new country, a new way of life, a place I had previously only studied in a classroom. Simply walking the streets, or along the banks of the Seine, or sampling a *crêpe au chocolat* were what brought me closest in contact to the actual France. Moreover, the mood in France was electric because of the World Cup festivities. I met so many interesting people of different backgrounds and ideologies, allegiances and opinions, all of whom were

passionate soccer fans. Being able to celebrate France's victory with millions of people on the streets of Paris was one of the highlights of my life.

I am extremely grateful to the American Society of the French Legion of Honor for offering their financial support of my experience in France and for helping me take advantage of the incredible opportunity which was presented to me by the Princeton in France program. Living in France awakened in me a thirst to visit other countries and to sample many different ways of life. I hope that in the future I will have the opportunity to do just that, for living in the midst of other cultures better enables us to understand, appreciate, and improve our own.