San Diego State-Imperial Valley grad moves on to England to study Shakespeare
By ROMAN FLORES, Staff Writer

The smile of one San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus graduate of the class of 2010 is a bit wider now after the pressure of getting into graduate school has lifted.

El Centro resident Leticia Garcia will leave her Valley roots to once again study overseas, this time at the Shakespearean Institute at the University of Birmingham, England, on a full-ride scholarship.

“I’m really excited just because my specialty in English literature is 16th-century English, or Shakespearean,” the 21-year-old Garcia said. “The institute feeds right into the Royal Shakespeare Company,” she said, which performs for the queen of England.

“It’s probably the best Shakespeare program in the world,” Garcia said of Birmingham.

When news of Garcia getting accepted reached her academic adviser at SDSU-IV, Norma Aguilar, she was just as excited as Garcia initially was.

“When she told me she’d gotten accepted I cried,” Aguilar said. “How amazing is that? To have a student come into our campus (and then end up in England studying Shakespeare).”

“She’s a fanatic about Shakespeare,” the proud adviser continued. “Anything related to Shakespeare she loves.”

Garcia’s mentor and former English professor at SDSU-IV, Jeanette Shumaker, agreed with those sentiments.

“When Letty took a Shakespeare class from me a year ago, I noticed that when our class would watch excerpts from Shakespeare’s plays on film Letty would silently recite the lines along with the actors — she knew the plays by heart,” Shumake said.

“Letty asked for the names of scholarly books about Shakespeare that she should read,” Shumaker said. “Such passion for an author as Letty has for Shakespeare is rare among college students,” the 29-year teacher stated in an e-mail.

Garcia, the product of Central Union High School, Imperial Valley College and SDSU-IV, studied abroad at the University of Oxford in the summer of 2009. Even with this taste of England already on her literature-loving palate, she still says the change in residence might be a bit difficult.

“I’m a little worried because I’m going to be schooling in England and their (learning and writing) style might be totally different,” Garcia said. “Their school system is like crazy over there. I wonder if they use (Modern Language Association), but I’m sure they do.”
Worries aside, Garcia said she hopes to pursue a doctoral degree at Oxford after completing a master’s degree at Birmingham.

“Eventually I’d like to become a professor of English, teaching Shakespeare,” Garcia said. “Maybe work in the RSC in archives and research his works.”

Her SDSU-IV cheerleaders, Shumaker and Aguilar, agree that Garcia’s high hopes are attainable for a girl like her.

“I think she will succeed because of her enthusiasm for Shakespeare, her excellent oral skills and her willingness to work hard to grow as a scholar,” Shumaker said, praising her former student. “She will succeed in life because she is resourceful, persistent, determined, smart and adventurous.”

Garcia, unaccustomed to and slightly embarrassed by the praise, will be leaving Sept. 26.

“The semester starts Oct. 4,” she said. “This will be the first birthday I won’t be home so I’ll be sad because I’ll miss my family, but I’m still excited.”

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