

## NEXT GENERATION

Name: *Vera Smirnova*

House: *Le Cerf*

Year of leaving: *2013*

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**What's hot:** Right now I'm a PhD student at UCLA, studying Civil and Environmental Engineering. I was always into science – particularly chemistry – and maths. I had a great teacher at Aiglon, too: Miss Carpenter (now Mrs Barré). After I left Aiglon, I went to the University of San Diego and got my Bachelor's in Chemical Engineering. From there, I did my Chemical Engineering Master's in New York. I then went into banking – I was offered a position at UBS and was very happy to go back to Switzerland. But I felt that I wanted to take my chemical engineering expertise and switch it to something more applied. That led me to my current programme. We have a great community of women scientists at UCLA and I'm also involved in Women in Stem: Breaking Barriers (WISTEM), an organisation aimed at empowering women in STEM. We recently organised our first ever conference at UCLA, with 2020 Nobel Prize winner Andrea Ghez, the UCLA distinguished Professor of Physics and Astronomy, as our key speaker – she was incredibly inspiring.

**What's next:** I'm hoping to complete my PhD at some point next year. I haven't got a set idea of what I'd like to do next; certainly a job which combines my technical and soft skills side – consulting, possibly. It would be great to also combine my experience and consult in an area like sustainability and the environment, or sustainable finance. I'm pretty confident that there is something out there which will be a good fit for me and which I'll enjoy. I'm certainly looking to stay in Southern California: I love the lifestyle here.

**What's Aiglon:** Aiglon was a big and important experience for me and I loved every moment of my time there. I learned a lot from living in such a diverse community. Expeditions were my favourite thing and I still go hiking every month, and play volleyball. Being a volleyball team captain and a prefect helped me to learn about leadership: how important it is to do the right thing when people look up to you. And I treasure the sense of community – both when I was at school and ever since I left. I feel like whenever someone from Aiglon is in LA, we always meet up.