

Telling Our EOP Stories

February 2012

Educational Opportunity Program



Esmeralda Gonzalez Peer Mentor Spotlight

A senior at Fresno State, Esmeralda Gonzales is a social work major as well as an EOP peer mentor who is determined to make a difference not only in the lives of others, but her own. Esmeralda took the chance to cross the lines that bounded her to her comfort zone and took away an experience she described as “life changing” and “eye-opening.”

During the winter of 2011, Esmeralda applied for and was accepted to go to Hong Kong with 14 other students from the social work department where they completed the Social Work 171T (International Social Work) course. Facilitated by Dr. Martha Vung-khanching, the objective of the course was to learn the functions of international Social Work. The course, however, was not limited to the confinement of classroom walls. For 10 days, Esmeralda and her classmates shadowed and paired up with different agencies in Hong Kong, participated in outreach events, and were given free time to explore the splendor of Hong Kong. Esmeralda described the experience as, “Different, for you cannot learn how it really is abroad in a classroom setting.” Esmeralda had the opportunity to pair up with the Hong Kong HIV/AIDS Foundation as well as the Christian Action Foundation where she paid visits to refuge homes, passed out informational pamphlets in karaoke bars and clubs, and came up with creative ideas to reach out to the general public.

Despite the hard work she put in, Esmeralda was able to enjoy the splendor of Hong Kong. Situated in Island Pacific Hotel, Hong Kong Island, Esmeralda and her classmates were in the midst of a Chinese neighborhood and had to adapt. “We have to communicate with minimal English and gestures.” Esmeralda found the experiences of being in a foreign community, in which she must adapt, to be very rewarding and educational. “I felt as though I’ve grown a lot, not just personally, but professionally as well.” Esmeralda felt the growth and awareness in herself and encourages everyone to take a leap of faith and experience a growth only offer outside their comfort zones.



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