How to be a Successful Graduate Student

By Diane Mazzey, M.S. Ed.

The transition from undergraduate to graduate school can be exciting as well as overwhelming. As a graduate student you must reorganize your life and your priorities to be successful. Success is different for everyone but there are resources in place to help you adjust and feel connected at Cal State University, Fullerton.

Tip 1
How to Adjust to Graduate School

Change can be hard for many people and we sometimes focus on change as being negative. Instead of looking at these changes as negative turn them into a positive. If you are missing family and friends, get involved with a club on campus or join one of the cultural centers. These are opportunities to meet new people and make new friends. If you are unsure of the direction you want your career to go in, visit the Career Center or meet with a Faculty Mentor. If you are questioning your abilities to handle graduate school know that you are good enough, smart enough, and you DO belong here - maintain your confidence!

Tip 2
Identify Academic Resources to Help You

There are a multitude of resources available to assist you with your academic success. If you find that you are struggling with your writing see a Graduate Learning Specialist. Academic support services through Graduate Studies provide students with the opportunity to attend workshops, meet one-on-one with a Graduate Learning Specialist, and attend Saturday writing Boot Camps.

If you would like to increase your success in class then schedule a time to meet with your instructor during his/her office hours. By meeting with your instructor you discuss his/her expectations for the class. To get the most out of your meeting prepare specific questions about the assignments, readings, and/or lectures. If you have academic questions or are not sure who to ask then go to your faculty or academic advisor and not your friends. Your advisor will point you in the right direction and get you connected. Your advisor can also provide you with valuable information about resources on campus as well as help you to set specific goals for your success.

Tip 3
Time Management

Most graduate students are working and have other responsibilities while attending school. You will need to find a way to manage your time and balance your coursework with your other responsibilities. Meet with your faculty advisor, instructor, or peers and discuss the time commitment needed to be successful in class. Communicate busy times to your family and friends to allow you to focus on classwork. If possible adjust your work schedule during demanding times like mid-terms or finals week to make your academic schedule more manageable.

Tip 4
Tips from MBA students on Being Successful in Graduate Studies

The Mihaylo College of Business and Economics Graduate Programs Office surveyed our MBA students about how they were successful in their graduate program. The MBA students were asked to provide us with some tips that they could pass onto our new students on how to be successful in the graduate program and this is what they said:

• Don't think like an undergraduate student – graduate courses are very different.
• Get involved with on-campus groups and attend networking and leadership events.
• Don't procrastinate! Start your projects early.
• Form study groups and learn from your classmates.
• Get support from family and friends.
• Take advantage of campus resources like the Graduate Learning Specialists.
• Get to know classmates and make sure you network.
• Plan ahead and stay organized with calendars and task lists. Be sure to set deadlines and milestones along the way.
• See your Academic Advisor and use Career Services.
• Visit your professors during their office hours.
• Study for tests based on what the professor expects. Always remember every professor has a different set of expectations.
• Communicate with your professors! They are not here to see you fail!
Graduate Student Funding Opportunities

From the Chancellor’s Office

By Gloria López

Are you considering pursuing a Ph.D. and a career in teaching? If so, the Graduate Equity Program, the California Pre-Doctoral Program, and the Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program (CDIP) are all designed to help you explore the possibilities and ensure your success! Go ahead and apply. Good luck!

The California State University (CSU) is dedicated to providing students with a high quality, accessible, and student focused academic experience. To accomplish its goal of diversifying the pool of potential faculty members to better serve its students, the CSU funds three programs that support the doctoral aspirations of CSU students: the Graduate Equity Program, the California Pre-Doctoral Program, and the Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program (CDIP).

The Graduate Equity Program

The Graduate Equity Program provides grants ranging from $500 to $2,500 per year. It is open to economically disadvantaged CSUF students who have successfully overcome educational obstacles. To apply for a Graduate Equity Fellowship, you must submit the following:

- A FAFSA demonstrating a financial need of at least $1,000, as determined by the U.S. Department of Education;
- Two confidential letters of recommendation from faculty members;
- A personal statement;
- And plan to enroll in a minimum of six units per semester in the 2014—2015 academic year.

The award money can help defer the costs of books, tuition, and/or graduate student living expenses. This year alone, 27 Titans were awarded a Graduate Equity Fellowship.

An insider’s tip: Go ahead and apply! Funding is limited, don’t pass up the opportunity! Write your personal statement at least five weeks before the deadline. Afterwards, sit down with the faculty members who are writing your letters of recommendation. Have them proofread your statement so that they can make suggestions for improvement and catch any grammatical errors. Also, make sure you give them at least two weeks to write your letter of recommendation.

The Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholars Program

The Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholars Program provides a $3,000 grant to students who are interested in pursuing a Ph.D. along with a future career in teaching. The funds are intended to expose students to unique opportunities like attendance and participation in professional symposiums, student memberships in professional organizations, travel to doctoral granting institutions to meet with faculty and current students, and a summer research internship. The funds can also be used to pay for graduate school applications and admission test fees. To apply you must review the program materials on the Office of Graduate Studies website and then contact the Office of Graduate Studies to receive a copy of the 2014—2015 application.

To apply to the Sally Casanova Pre-Doctoral Scholars Program you must be:
- enrolled at CSUF as of Spring 2014;
- enrolled at CSUF for at least one semester of the 2014—2015 academic year;
- either a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident;
- interested in obtaining a research doctorate.

Applications are reviewed for completeness by the Office of Graduate Studies and then forwarded to the Chancellor’s Office for final review and award selection. Sally Casanova Scholars are selected on the basis of three major criteria: potential for success in completing a doctoral program, probable effectiveness of the student/faculty plan, and level of economic and educational disadvantage.

An insider’s tip: The application consists of multiple parts. Make sure that one portion builds on the next. Pay attention to detail when writing your essays and make sure that your answers are in line with the stated purpose of the fellowship. State your research and career goals in a clear and concise manner. Have your Faculty Sponsor proofread it more than once. When designing your budget be realistic and not too vague. Finally, make sure you have followed all the directions and answered all the questions!

The Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program

The Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program (CDIP) was established in 1987, it is one of the largest programs of its kind in the United States. The CDIP provides student loans to a limited number of individuals pursuing full-time doctoral degrees at accredited universities throughout the United States. After participants receive their doctoral degrees and obtain a qualifying instructional position in the CSU, a portion of their loan from this program will be forgiven every year of qualifying employment.

As of June 2012 the program has loaned out $46 million to 1,965 doctoral students enrolled in universities throughout the nation, and 1,154 of these participants have successfully earned doctoral degrees. Of these 1,154 participants, 56% has subsequently obtained employment in the CSU system.

To apply for the Chancellor’s Doctoral Incentive Program, you must:
- Be a new or continuing full-time students who will be in doctoral programs at accredited universities anywhere in the United States during the 2014-2015 academic year.
- Submit a personal essay.
- Submit an action plan.
- Have a faculty sponsor (whom you must identify and reach out to).
- U.S. citizenship is not required; however, one must be eligible to work in the U.S.
- Although enrollment/employment at the CSU is not required for loan approval, a quarter of awards are expected to be made to those serving in positions in the CSU system.

Selection process:
- After applications are submitted, a campus committee evaluates the applications and makes recommendations for further consideration to the CSUF President.
- The President then forwards campus nominations to the Chancellor’s Office. A system-wide committee reviews the campus nominations and makes recommendations to the Chancellor for final approval.

The CDIP seeks to provide loans to doctoral students who are interested in applying and competing for CSU faculty positions after completion their doctoral degree to diversify its pool of applicants. However, being awarded a CDIP loan does not guarantee you employment in one of the CSU campuses.
Mitzi Ávila

Mitzi Ávila is a second-year graduate student in the Sociology program. When she found out that she was awarded the Sally Casanova Scholarship, she felt excited, proud, and hopeful. For her, this opportunity means that she will be provided with tools that will help her reach her goals. Her research, which she is conducting alongside Dr. Berna Torr (Assistant Professor of Sociology) and Dr. Patricia Literte (Associate Professor of Sociology), focuses on Mexican men and the concept of machismo. As a race and gender scholar, Mitzi hopes to add a new perspective of masculinity since it is not only prevalent among the Latino community, but also within other cultures. As a race and gender scholar, Mitzi hopes to add a new perspective of masculinity since it is not only prevalent among the Latino community, but also within other cultures. Mitzi’s ultimate goal is to become a college or public university professor. As a Mexican female, she wants to serve as an inspiration to others. Her journey has been difficult, with multiple obstacles, but thanks to the support of her family she has been able to overcome each and every one of them.

Georgia Halkia

Georgia Halkia is working towards her Master’s in Public Health. When she learned that she was one of the students chosen to be a Sally Casanova scholar she felt humbled and honored. She has always dreamed of becoming an educator but financial difficulties, together with having a child early on, made it difficult for her to pursue her dream. She is currently the research assistant for Dr. Michele Wood (Assistant Professor of Health Science) in a research project funded by the Department of Homeland Security through the START (Study of Terrorism and Response to Terrorism) Center at the University of Maryland. Her research focuses on disaster preparedness and the role of women in computer programming. Working alongside Dr. Volker Janssen (Associate Professor of History), her research seeks to answer how gender and technology are socially shaped and thus have the potential to be reshaped. She never thought she would return to complete a graduate degree because of financial need and time commitment, but she has discovered that at CSUF there are numerous resources for graduate students. Her ultimate career goal is to continue in academia and become a professor, or researcher, at a local university.

Sidalin Hernández

Sidalin Hernández is a second-year graduate student in the History program. When Sidalin found out she was one of the Sally Casanova scholars she was in shock. She knew that this is a tremendous achievement that will allow her the opportunity to visit numerous Ph.D. programs throughout California and participate in a summer internship. Her research focuses on gender relations and the role of women in computer programming. Working alongside Dr. Volker Janssen (Associate Professor of History), her research seeks to answer how gender and technology are socially shaped and thus have the potential to be reshaped. She never thought she would return to complete a graduate degree because of financial need and time commitment, but she has discovered that at CSUF there are numerous resources for graduate students. Her ultimate career goal is to continue in academia and become a professor, or researcher, at a local university.

Gloria López

Gloria López is a second-year graduate student in the History program. Being selected as a Sally Casanova Scholar has been one of Gloria’s most humbling experiences. The application process was a shared experience between her and her advisor Dr. Cora Granata (Associate Professor of History). After being taken under Dr. Granata’s wing, Gloria has become more confident in her journey to pursue a Ph.D. Her current research focuses on the relationship between history and memory, on more specifically, on how Americans remember the Cold War in comparison to Germans, with a focus on how American sites of memory (i.e. museums, archive, etc.) shape our collective memory of the past and, by extension, how collective memories helped shape an American national identity. Gloria’s ultimate career goal is to become a history professor so she can become a mentor to first-generation college students like herself.
Spotlight on Faculty Research

Department: Civil and Environmental Engineering

By Dr. Binod Tiwari

The magnitude 9.0 Tohoku Earthquake that occurred on March 11, 2011 caused a massive devastation in Japan. More than 20,000 people were dead or missing. The earthquake caused more than $235 billion in economic loss, which made it the costliest natural disaster in the world. The main cause for so many deaths and property loss was the devastating tsunami. In addition, there were more than 4,000 landslides triggered by the earthquake. The total death toll by the landslides was approximately 20 people, which is considered to be significant.

I was nominated by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) to visit Japan for the post-earthquake reconnaissance study. I, along with two other members of the team, visited affected areas from Fukushima to Sendai for ten days and collected data pertinent to the effect of earthquake on landslides, slopes, and embankments. Even though the earthquake occurred during a dry season, thousands of landslides were triggered. Delay of the earthquake by three months could trigger 40 or 50 thousand landslides and cause an increase in the death tolls. During the field visit we evidenced very large-sized landslides. Therefore, I was interested in conducting research pertinent to the triggering mechanism of large-sized landslides during earthquakes. This sabbatical leave is helpful to initiate this research.

During my sabbatical leave in Fall 2013, I am spending majority of my time at Kobe University, Japan. I am working as a visiting Assistant Professor at Kobe University, which is a 45 minute train ride away from Osaka. My counterpart, Professor Katsuuyuki Kawai (Associate Professor of the Research Center for Urban Safety and Security), is well known for developing computer based models to predict rainfall induced landslides. My research lab at Cal State Fullerton is well known for experimental modeling of rainfall and earthquake induced landslides. Therefore, our diversified expertise to study the mechanism of earthquake and rainfall induced landslides could complement each other to make a better prediction model for landslides. However, Professor Kawai’s computer-based modeling technic needs experimental data to validate the model. Our collaborative work will be beneficial in predicting the intensity and duration of rainfall and/or intensity of earthquake shaking to trigger landslides. It is highly beneficial to have those models for infrastructure management such as highways, railways, dams, hydropower stations, etc.

I have one graduate and two undergraduate students continuously working at Fullerton on experimental modeling. During the past five months, beginning this past summer, they prepared more than five soil models at different slopes. They are also modeling an actual slope located in Mission Viejo, where more than 200 houses were built near an existing landslide area. They applied different intensities and durations of rainfall from flat to very steep slopes to study how quickly the rainwater infiltrates into the soil mass and causes the landslide. In Japan, I have an undergraduate, a master’s, and a Ph.D. student working with me to develop the computer-based model for the slope my students are modeling in Fullerton. It is exciting to know that the results are matching reasonably well to validate our computer-based model. I am also visiting the landslide areas that I visited during my post-earthquake reconnaissance mission in 2011. There I am collecting soil samples so that I can model our soil model on the shaking table. The process that this table follows is first, we set a soil slope model, then we apply rainfall of desired intensity for a desired period of time, and lastly, we shake the table with a similar intensity to the Tohoku Earthquake. The models will be heavily instrumented so that the behavior of soil deformation and sliding could be captured in a real time basis. At the same time, Professor Kawai will go ahead and model that behavior in his computer modeling program.

I am enjoying this sabbatical leave in different ways. I was able to co-author eight journal papers and attend 14 conference proceedings in the past five months. Those papers were related to the research work that my students have completed in the past three years. Three of these papers also include our current collaborative research work with Kobe University. I was not able to publish those research results due to heavy teaching responsibilities and some administrative loads in recent years. Moreover, I have delivered four invited lectures at various universities in Japan. By attending these universities, I am able to disseminate my research and showcase Cal State Fullerton to the Japanese academic community.

Overall, my short sabbatical leave will be helpful to initiate collaborative research between Japanese universities and Cal State Fullerton. Three universities in Japan are interested in starting a collaborative research effort with us. I truly hope this partnership will be beneficial for both, Japanese and U.S. institutions. I would like to thank the Associated Students Inc. (ASI) of Cal State Fullerton for continuously supporting me and my undergraduate students on this research for the past 4 years through the IRA funding. The research would not have been possible if I didn’t have 81 enthusiastic students who are currently working with me, and those who have worked, tirelessly for the past eight years of my academic career at Cal State Fullerton. I thank them from the bottom of my heart. The moral and administrative support that I have been continuously receiving from the dean and associate dean of the college of ECS was instrumental to my success. Moreover, it would not be possible to get success without the cooperation from the departmental colleagues. Therefore, I sincerely believe that the cooperation I am receiving from my departmental colleagues, dean, and students will continue to initiate this collaborative research between Japanese institutions and Cal State Fullerton.
Inside the Affordable Care Act

The CSU Health Insurance Education Project

By Ángela Gutierrez

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was signed into law in March 2010. This comprehensive health reform law makes quality health insurance more affordable and accessible to Americans. The law requires that most individuals have health insurance by January 1, 2014. Covered California is the state’s health care marketplace, or exchange, where individuals may get financial assistance to pay for health insurance and compare coverage options. Covered California awarded grants totaling $37 million to 48 community organizations for outreach and education. The California State Universities (CSUs) were awarded $1.25 million, the largest award of any grantee.

The Impact of Covered California

All insurance plans will include Ten Essential Health Benefits. All insurance plans through Covered California will include benefits and services within, at least, the following Ten areas: 1) Ambulatory patient services (medical services handled on an outpatient basis); 2) Emergency services; 3) Hospitalization; 4) Maternity and newborn care; 5) Mental health and substance use disorder services (including behavioral health treatments) 6) Rehabilitative and habilitative services (physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy); 7) Laboratory Services; 8) Preventative services, wellness services, and chronic disease management; 9) Pediatric services (including dental and vision care); and 10) Prescription drugs. Changes are coming about as a result of the Affordable Care Act. Government assistance toward health insurance plans is available for middle and lower income individuals and families. In addition, coverage cannot be denied for preexisting conditions. Beginning January 1, 2014, the federal law will require that most individuals have health insurance. The open enrollment period to purchase a health insurance plan through Covered California is from October 1, 2013 to March 30, 2014.

Health Insurance Options: Where Do I Fit In?

Based on your income and household size, you will qualify: 1) For the recently expanded Medical; 2) for government assistance for health insurance plans through Covered California; or 3) to purchase through Covered California at full pricing, which will typically be more affordable than other private health insurance companies.
Here are a couple of options:

- Individuals with an income below $15,000 and a family of four with an income below $31,000 each qualify for free health coverage through the Medical program.
- Individuals with an income between $15,000 and $45,000 or a family of four with an income between $31,000 and $92,000 qualify for government assistance through Covered California.

Example 1: If you are a 23-year old CSUF student with an annual income of $20,000:
- Cost per month: $146.00
- Government pays: $61.00
- Monthly premium is: $85.00

Example 2: Family of four, where parents are 42 years of age and an annual income of $40,000:
- Cost per month: $902.00
- Government pays: $732.00
- Monthly premium is: $164.00

How Do I Enroll in a Health Insurance Plan Through Covered California?

Step 1: Choose a Metal Tier
Choosing a metal tier requires individuals to choose between a Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum plan. All four options offer the same services, but differ in one aspect: the percentage that will be covered by the insurer and by the insured. Selection of metal tier is based on the judgment of the individual and the perceived high or low use of medical expenditures he or she will have throughout the insured time frame.

Step 2: Choose a Plan
The second step for enrollment in an insurance plan is to choose one of three plans. Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) plans are designed for people who want predictable costs and one doctor that coordinates all their health care needs. Members must use physicians within their network (Covered California Participant Guide, 2013). Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) are more costly than the HMO plans, but visits to specialists can be made without a referral from the primary doctor. PPOs allow members to see doctors both in and out of their plans’ network. However, costs will be dramatically lower when using out-of-network doctors and hospitals (Covered California Participant Guide, 2013). Exclusive Provider Organization (EPO) plans are a hybrid between HMOs and PPOs. Like an HMO, members choose a Primary Care Physician. Like a PPO, members have access to the health insurance company’s EPO network, which typically offers more limited choices than the PPO. Unlike the PPO, the health plan does not cover any services members get from out-of-network providers. The selection of a plan is based on the preference of the consumer on the flexibility of seeing in-network and out-of-network providers.

Not Having Health Insurance: The Penalty
Individuals who do not have coverage in 2014 may be required to pay a penalty. Penalties will be implemented in three phases, with the penalty being higher during each phase. Non-covered individuals will pay 1% of their family income or $95 per adult and $47.50 per child (up to $285 for a family), whichever is greater. Affordability is seen most in the cost-sharing reductions and premium assistance offered to individuals. For example, individuals who earn up to 400% above the federal poverty level (FPL) are eligible for lower monthly premiums and reduction of costs when seeking health-related services.

Covered California at CSU Fullerton: The CSU Health Insurance Education Project (CSU HIEP)
Our mission is to provide outreach and education to the CSU community especially its students, their families, and part-time staff about the new health insurance system and how they can access affordable insurance through Covered California. Our efforts include all 23 CSU campuses with emphasis on 15, including CSU Fullerton. The primary investigator is Dr. Walter Zelman, Chair of the Department of Public Health, CSULA, Dr. Jessie Jones, Chair of the Department of Health Science at CSU Fullerton and the faculty advisor at Fullerton, Angela Gutierrez, a second year Master of Public Health student, and Genesis Sandoval, a first-year Master of Public Health student, are the CSU Fullerton campus coordinators.

Gutierrez and Sandoval have partnered with the Office of Graduate Studies, to reach out to incoming graduate students and increase awareness of the new health care options and potential financial assistance offered through Covered California. Partnerships have also been formed with CSU Fullerton Housing, Academic Departments, and with the Student Health and Counseling Center. All current and upcoming efforts are aimed at increasing students’ awareness. Health insurance helps protect you and your families from medical uncertainties life may bring. If you would like to obtain additional information and learn more about the new health insurance options, please contact your campus coordinators at (657) 278-3807 or at fullerton.csuhiep@gmail.com or by visiting their on-campus office, located in KHS 106-A. To obtain Covered California information, you can visit http://www.calstate.edu/coveredca/ and click on “Request More Info” to receive personalized assistance.
El 17 de agosto de 2013, la oficina de estudios de posgrado les dio la bienvenida a los nuevos estudiantes de posgrado durante la orientación que se llevó acabo ese día. Fue durante este evento que los estudiantes tuvieron la oportunidad de explorar los diferentes servicios y programas que ofrece la universidad, tales como: la biblioteca Pollak, el centro de apoyo a mujeres y hombres, el centro vocacional, el centro de tutoría, el centro de servicios para personas con capacidades diferentes, entre otros. Todos los estudiantes fueron recibidos con una bienvenida por todos los voluntarios presentes al momento de registrar su llegada. Ya con itinerario y café en mano comenzaron su mañana conociendo e interactuando con otros compañeros de su misma carrera. A las 9:45 de la mañana los estudiantes se dirigieron al primer taller el cual incluyó información acerca de los protocolos y trámites necesarios, las oportunidades de ayuda financiera, la transición a un programa de posgrado y la perspectiva familiar dentro de un programa de posgrado. Los talleres fueron presentados en inglés y en español. Impartieron mucha información a los asistentes en como apoyar al estudiante posgrado en casa y las expectativas académicas a este nivel. En estas sesiones los estudiantes también tuvieron la oportunidad de conocer e interactuar con profesores de CSUF y se compartieron testimonios de estudiantes que actualmente están cursando sus programas de posgrado. Los estudiantes también tuvieron la oportunidad de escuchar las diferentes perspectivas de las expectativas de los profesores hacia los estudiantes de nivel posgrado. Para la hora del almuerzo los estudiantes pudieron disfrutar de una rica comida y una feria de recursos ofrecidos en CSUF. Este día fue inolvidable, interactivo y divertido para los nuevos estudiantes de posgrado.
On Friday September 20, Cal State Fullerton became the headquarters for advocacy during the fifth annual Closing the Latino Achievement Gap Summit. This year’s theme, “Sin Fronteras: Beyond Borders,” sought to voice the need of educational equity in all communities. With a full agenda beginning at 8 a.m., Dr. Berenecea Johnson-Eanes, Vice President of Student Affairs, welcomed faculty, staff, students and community to Cal State Fullerton. As participants sat down and enjoyed their breakfast in the Titan Student Union, Dr. Mildred Garcia, president of CSUF, along with Assembly Member Sharon Quirk-Silva shared opening remarks with the attendees. The keynote speech was delivered by Dr. Al Mijares, Superintendent of the Orange County Department of Education. Close to 600 attendees participated in a series of informational workshops whose purpose was to share best practices on how to help Latino students be academically successful and how to continue closing the opportunity gap between mainstream students and Latinos.

After the keynote address, the attendees had the opportunity to enjoy a panel discussion facilitated by Dr. José Moreno, President of Los Amigos de Orange County. On the panel were: Mr. Lou Correa, California State Senator, Dr. Elizabeth I. Novack, Superintendent of the Anaheim School District, Rosa Harrizon, Co-founder of Padres Promotores de la Educación, Reuben Franco, Executive Director of the Orange County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and Hidy Esther Lopez, a CSUF student. Throughout the event, the participants had the opportunity to enjoy a series of workshops in both English and Spanish. The workshops varied in topics, but all related to the Latino/a community. These ranged from improving retention and transition to college for undocumented youth, to bilingual education in the K-12 system, and how to bridge the opportunity gap for English learners within the academic institution. Panels and discussions arose regarding how parents can be more involved in their kids’ academic journeys, how retention rates can be increased so more Latinos are able to complete their education, and how a special focus should be given to increase the number of Latino males within the institution. As the event came to an end, Dr. José L. Cruz, Vice President of Academics Affairs, closed with a powerful speech that reminded all participants that the "educational achievement in the Latino community is not only possible, but probable." The day came to an end with a resource fair and a reception hosted by Encuentros Leadership, a nonprofit focused on supporting young Latino males into achieving a higher education.

El viernes 20 de septiembre la Universidad Estatal de Fullerton fue la sede de la "Cumbre para Cerrar la Brecha de Rendimiento Latino", conocida en inglés como "Closing the Latino Achievement Gap Summit." El tema de este año fue "Sin fronteras: Más allá de los límites", el cual buscó expresar la necesidad de tener igualdad educativa en nuestras comunidades. La conferencia empezó a las 8 de la mañana con una grata bienvenida a profesores, estudiantes y miembros de la comunidad a la Universidad Estatal de Fullerton por parte de la Vice-Presidenta de Asuntos Estudiantiles, la Dra. Berenecea-Johnson-Eanes. Los participantes disfrutaron de un desayuno en el Titan Student Union, lugar en donde la presidenta de CSUF, la Dra. Mildred García, acompañada de la asambleísta Sharon Quirk-Silva, compartieron algunas palabras para dar inicio a la conferencia y presentar al orador del discurso de apertura, el Dr. Al Mijares, superintendente del departamento del condado de Orange. Con una asistencia de alrededor de 600 personas, la serie de talleres informativos cumplió con el propósito de compartir mejores estrategias de cómo ayudar a los estudiantes Latinos a ser exitosos en el ámbito académico y, de esta manera, continuar cerrando la brecha de rendimiento que existe entre los estudiantes convencionales y los estudiantes Latinos.

Después del discurso de apertura los participantes tuvieron la oportunidad de asistir una mesa redonda, moderado por el Dr. José Moreno, Presidente de Los Amigos del condado de Orange. La mesa redonda estaba compuesta de: el señor Lou Correa, Senador del Estado de California, la Dra. Elizabeth I. Novack, superintendente del Distrito de Anaheim, Rosa Harrizon, co-fundadora del grupo Padres Promotores de la Educación, Reuben Franco, director ejecutivo de la cámara de comercio del condado de Orange, y Hidy Esther López, estudiante de CSUF. A lo largo del evento los participantes tuvieron la oportunidad de disfrutar una serie de talleres llevados a cabo en inglés y en español. Los talleres cubrieron varios temas de interés para la comunidad Latina. Estos talleres tomaron temas de mejoramiento en la retención estudiantil y el proceso de transición a la universidad para estudiantes indocumentados, la educación bilingüe en el sistema K-12 y cómo cerrar la brecha de oportunidad dentro de las instituciones académicas para estos estudiantes de habla hispana. Surgieron paneles y conversaciones con respecto a las diferentes formas que los padres de familia se pueden involucrar más en la trayectoria académica de sus hijos, cómo incrementar los porcentajes de retención estudiantil para latinos para que estos puedan completar de manera exitosa su educación y como debe existir un enfoque específico en varones Latino para poder incrementar las cifras de estos mismos dentro de las instituciones académicas. Al acercarse el final del evento, el Dr. José L. Cruz, Vice-Presidente de Asuntos Académicos de CSUF, dio un discurso a los asistentes recordándoles que "el éxito académico de la comunidad Latina no es solamente posible, sino realizable." La conferencia concluyó con una feria informativa en donde los asistentes podían explorar los diversos recursos de la CSUF y el Condado de Orange. Después de concluida la conferencia, la organización sin fines de lucro "Encuentros", la cual tiene como propósito el promover la educación universitaria entre jóvenes Latinos, fue el anfitrión de una pequeña recepción en la que compartieron los múltiples proyectos que están actualmente en marcha.
Writing Tips

Passive Voice in Sentences
By Dr. Gina Armendariz

Question: When my professor gives me back my writing assignments, I always get comments that I use the passive voice in my sentences. What are passive voice sentences and why are they wrong?

When writing, it is important that you are clear and your meaning is understood to the reader. This means constructing sentences that are strong, concise, and direct. This is why the use of active sentences is important when writing. An active sentence is one in which the subject of the sentence is performing the actions. For example, John loves Juana. Here John is the subject. John is performing the action of loving Juana. In this sentence Juana is the object of the action. Juana is being loved by John. The use of active sentences requires fewer words and keeps your sentences from becoming complicated or wordy.

Passive voice sentences are not incorrect; however, these types of sentences are indirect ways of communicating information. When you use passive voice sentences the verb (action) is the subject of the sentence. For example, Juana is loved by John. In this sentence Juana is the subject but she is not performing the action, she is receiving it. Juana is the recipient of John’s love. The focus in this sentence is shifted to Juana from John. To check to make sure your sentences are active voice in form you need to determine if the subject is taking the action. If your subject is not taking the action and the action is being performed upon it, then you have a passive sentence. Passive voice sentences may not the best way to phrase your thoughts and ideas. You can improve your writing by converting your passive voice sentences into active voice sentences. A problem with passive voice sentences is that you run the risk of leaving out the person or thing performing the action. For example, Juana is loved. This is a complete sentence however we don’t know who or what is doing the loving.

“Passive voice sentences are not incorrect; however, these types of sentences are indirect ways of communicating information.”

Passive sentences are useful when you want to hide or obscure who is taking the action. This technique is often used by politicians. Oftentimes politicians may want to avoid telling the public who was performing an action in order to avoid blame. It is used when there is lack of information. For example: Bombs were dropped; shots were fired; your gas and electricity will be shut off; the house was burglarized. These are all passive sentences designed to convey information without the identification of the subject. In these sentences we don’t know who dropped the bombs or fired the shots. Doesn’t it sound much better to hear your gas and electricity will be shut off rather than We, the gas and electric company, will be shutting off your services?

Passive voice sentences are harder for individuals with limited education, as well as limited language skills, to understand. It is important to know your audience. When writing for a general audience, stick to active voice sentences. It is sometimes useful to use a passive voice when you want to emphasize an event or happening, such as in creative writing. For example, writing the box was stolen instead of somebody stole the box shifts the focus of the reader to the box then shifts the focus to who did it? The difference is very subtle but your focus does shift. Passive voice also creates a sense of objectivity that is scholarly. When using passive voice you are taking yourself and your opinions out of the action. For example, The chemicals were mixed not We mixed the chemicals. When writing with objectivity one does not want to insert themselves into their conclusions. Ultimately you can use passive voice however, keep it to a minimum. Again, be aware of your audience and tailor your writing to meet your needs while keeping in mind the voice you are writing in.
Overcoming Academic Obstacles

By Georgia Halkia

Success is defined as the accomplishment of an aim or purpose. The question is "what prevents people from realizing their dreams?" You may think that the answer to this question is complex, and indeed there are too many factors that are intertwined and lead to inaction. People talk about obstacles and how they get in the way of accomplishing their goals. Well, I will not disagree with that but after spending most of my life trying I have found that the biggest obstacle of all is lack of opportunity.

I always knew what I wanted to be but I never knew how to go about it. I came from a home that supported individuality and encouraged freethinking. I grew up in a country that favored few, and those few were not necessarily selected on the premise of merit but on the connections and the people they knew. My parents were working class folks, who worked ten hours a day and tried to provide the best they could for their family. My mom worked at a factory and the only thing I can remember was that deep inside of me I knew that I did the right thing. That is why I got up every morning and started over, focused on what I had to do, and tried to overcome the fear I felt. Three years have gone by and I managed to survive. In fact I did better than simply surviving. I have successfully completed all of my master’s classes, I work as a lecturer for the Department of Health Science, I made my little apartment just the way I wanted, and my daughter supports and loves as much as she always did, if not more. I am planning to continue my education by applying to doctoral programs and I am confident that if I discipline myself I can definitely do it!

So, what does it take to overcome academic obstacles? There are two key words that I would like to emphasize: faith and discipline. First and foremost, embrace self-awareness. Look deep within yourself and see what you really want. Know yourself, recognize your talents and your limitations, and use your time to your advantage. Procrastination is the biggest enemy in the process of reaching your dreams. Secondly, create a realistic plan based on your lifestyle and abilities and stick with it. Discipline yourself by remaining focused and do not sway from your plan. Remind yourself what made you want to pursue that dream to begin with. Write down what you do not like about your life and find possible solutions. Be aware that the road will not always be wide open but everything worthwhile takes time and patience. Your hard work will pay off one day, but you need to let go of anything that holds you back. Last but not least, you owe it to yourself to remove the “voices” from your head that tell you “you can’t do it, you will fail and everyone will be laughing at you.” Bravery is not a skill. It is about challenging yourself with new experiences and standing up for what you believe.

Obstacles are part of life and they provide an opportunity for self-exploration. I like to view obstacles as challenges that make us stronger and better people. No matter what life throws at you, you ought to remember that any time a door closes, life opens a window, and it is up to you to find it. Being open minded and free of fear will take you places you never imagined. Faith in ourselves should be the driving force that gives life and direction to our dreams. Life is full of challenges that require commitment, bravery, and passion for creation. Unleash your inner self and conquer your dreams.

Superando obstáculos académicos

Traducción por: Melisa Montaño-Ochoa

El éxito es definido como el logro de una meta o propósito. La pregunta que nos debemos hacer es, “¿qué es lo que le impide a las personas realizar sus sueños?” Tal vez piense que la respuesta a ésta pregunta es algo compleja pero, algo que queda claro es que, hay una serie de factores influyan y llevan a que las personas lleguen a un estado de inactividad. Yo vengo de una familia que inculcaba el individualismo y fomentaba la libertad de pensamiento. Mis padres provenían de una clase trabajadora en la que trabajaban 10 horas diarias para poder proveernos lo mejor que sus posibilidades nos podían dar. Mi madre trabajaba en una fábrica y recuerdo vivamente el sentimiento de culpa que sentía cuando sacaba bajas calificaciones. Los años pasaron y llegué a un punto de mi vida en el que tuve que enfrentar mis mayores obstáculos.

Después de terminar mi matrimonio de 18 años, quedarme con mi hija adolescente en un apartamento vacío, con un ingreso de $800 al mes, deudas de $2,000 mensuales y un ropero lleno de ropa de marca que me recordaba de la vida que algún día fue, decidí tomar las riendas de mi vida. La mayoría de mis amistades me tenían lástima y yo notaba que no estaban de acuerdo con la decisión que había tomado. Hubo momentos en los que me sentí asustada y estúpida, al punto que por las noches lloraba hasta quedarme dormida. Lo interesante de todo era que muy dentro de mí sabía que había tomado la decisión correcta. Fue por ese sentimiento que me levantaba todas las mañanas y comenzaba de la nada, enfaciéndome en lo que se tenía que hacer en el día a día y de esta manera superar ese estado que sentía. Han pasado trece años y he podido hacer más que sólo soportar.

He terminado exitosamente mis clases de maestría, actualmente trabajo para la Facultad de Ciencias de la Salud, he acomodado mi pequeño apartamento exactamente como yo quería y mi hija me apoya y me ama igual, sino es que más, que antes. Actualmente estoy en proceso de solicitar admisión a diversos programas de Doctorado. Hoy puedo decir que los obstáculos son parte de la vida y nos proveen una oportunidad para poder explorarnos a nosotros mismos. A mí me gusta ver a los obstáculos como oportunidades de fortalecernos y mejorarnos. No importa qué retos le ponga la vida, uno debe aprender que cuando una puerta se cierra se abre una ventana, y quedo en negocios buscar esa ventana de oportunidad. Utilízelo todo esto y desátu su “yo” interior para que así pueda conquistar sus sueños.
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Yes, you must enroll during the Fall and Spring semesters. If you have no other classes to take, then you must enroll in GRAD 700. You might be able to enroll in GRAD 700 via University Extended Education. Come to the Office of Graduate Studies at the start of the semester to pick up the paperwork or download the form from www.fullerton.edu/graduate

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