

How the IE Experience Keeps on Giving—Social Worker Continues to Make a Difference, August 6, 2015



Nearly ten years have passed since Mayra Hernandez, the first in her family to attend college, enrolled in the IE Pre Grad Internship. She went on to earn her MSW in Social Work at UT and then became a bilingual counselor at Safe Place in Austin, providing individual, family and group counseling to victims of sexual assault and or domestic violence. Mayra now is a Random Drug Testing and Substance Abuse Counselor for the Manor Independent School District. We recently caught up with Mayra and she shared how IE has continued to change her life.

WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT IE?

“I can still remember how my experience with the IE Program began. This is a memory I will forever cherish. The IE Program was the beginning of many wonderful professional and personal growth opportunities to come. I was sitting in an undergraduate Social Work statistics class under the direction of Dr. Stephanie Rivaux. I

remember her coming up to me and complimenting me on my dedication. She encouraged me to find out more about the IE Program. I did just that. I am glad I did. Since that day, I grabbed on to her as my mentor and I turned in my application to become a part of the IE Program. When I started this program, I never realized that would be the beginning of so many opportunities for me. They believed in me and therefore I learned how to believe in myself. I claimed my future and told myself I would make it, and so far I have accomplished all the goals I set for myself.”

WHAT ROLE DID IE PLAY IN YOUR DECISION TO ATTEND GRADUATE SCHOOL AND COMPLETE THE MSW?

“Put simply, I would not have gone to grad school if not for the IE program. One thing I learned was that money is not always a barrier to getting an education. There are lots of opportunities out there from scholarships to financial aid, etc. But there is really no assistance or supportive programs that help students in actually making it through grad school and not falling through the cracks. If it was not for IE I would have gotten lost or fallen. The IE program helped me gain confidence, taught me what I needed to ask, showed me how to obtain assistance, among other necessary tools needed to actually stay in school and successfully finish my degree. My mentor supported me and prepared me during my entire IE experience. When I went to graduate school, it was a feeling of ‘OK, I already know this. I got this.’ IE helped make that very scary graduate school image less scary and made completing an MSW possible.”

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED AND WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE?

“My journey has not been an easy one, but when you have the right circle of people supporting you—something I did because of the networking skills learned through IE—anything is possible and those rocky roads are not that bad. I am now a Random Drug Testing and Substance Abuse Counselor for the

Manor Independent School District. I hope to touch many lives as I do my work every day just as the IE Program and my mentor did for me.”

WATCH A UT DEVELOPMENT VIDEO IN WHICH MAYRA, SHORTLY AFTER COMPLETING IE, DISCUSSES HER EXPERIENCE:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTgjp16A2o4>

[See 1:44 - 3:11]

READ MAYRA’S 2006 REFLECTION ABOUT THE IE INTERNSHIP:

http://www.ut-ie.com/l-m/m_hernandez.html