8-18-2010

CPD Legacy Story: Fangjuan "Vivian" Hou

Center for Persons With Disabilities

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Our next CPD Legacy Story is by Vivian Hou, a graduate student majoring in Special Education at USU. She currently works as a General Graduate Assistant for the Interdisciplinary Training Division at the CPD.

My name is Fangjuan Hou, or Vivian, as I am called in Utah where I have lived for the past, almost four years. I now claim Logan as my second hometown. However, I did not even know there was a place called Logan on the planet until I tried to book my tickets from Qingdao, China to Utah three years and nine months ago.

Pursuing a higher education had been my dream for years, and Dr. Judith M. Holt, the Director of Interdisciplinary Training Division at the Center for Persons with Disabilities, was the person who made it come true.

In 2006, I received admission letters from a couple of graduate schools in the United States, but none of them would provide financial aid. It was not possible for me to study abroad without financial assistance. I tried to communicate again with the schools, asking for financial aid, but was turned down. It was late June, and I was almost giving up hope when I received an email from Dr. Forbush, a former professor in the Special Education and Rehabilitation Department at USU, who took the trouble to help me with my admission issues. He told me that Dr. Holt would provide me a graduate assistantship position at the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University. I was thrilled! If I was lucky enough to get a visa, I would fulfill my dream of furthering my education. Yes, I did get my visa.

Although I was so tired because of the 13 hour flight, and my days and nights were turned upside down, I still remember the first day I met Dr. Holt, a kind lady who welcomed me with a broad smile. She introduced me to a few colleagues and helped me to figure out whom to contact at the university to start my schooling and my work situation. When Dr. Holt knew my computer was on the way and I had not yet checked into my apartment, she arranged a computer and work station for my immediate use to help me cope with entering a whole new world, which needed the Internet to accomplish most of the work.

I could not possibly get through my master’s program without the support from Dr. Holt, who has helped me tremendously over these years. She was aware of the struggle I was having, making little progress on my studies or my work, and she did not miss any chances to cheer me up and encourage me to move on. She sent me to conferences that broadened my mind, and she provided me with multiple opportunities to work with a variety of projects, through which I have gained valuable experiences, which enriched my knowledge as well as benefited my studies.

CPD is like a family to me. Many people here have helped me and have made a great impact on my life in different ways. I started to work with Kay Hansen shortly after I came to the CPD, and from her I learned how to work professionally and the importance of being precise with my work. Kay treated me like a mother would treat a daughter, sharing tips of taking care of a car, introducing me to the best dentist, celebrating memorable dates for me, and advising me on my schooling. Becky Keeley, a co-worker, and I became good friends through working closely together. She invites me to her house to watch Chinese movies and she always remembers my birthday. Stan Cleland provided me with unlimited help and he was extremely generous with his knowledge, energy and time. I can’t name all of those who have helped me here, however, I truly appreciate every single smile and greeting I have had. I am grateful that I have been part of the CPD, which really has made a difference in my life.