An Interview with Fall Scholarship Winner Vicky Rojas

My name is Vicky Rojas, and I am a 30-year-old Venezuelan. Nowadays, thousands of Venezuelans have migrated to the United States. I am among these thousands of people. It is very sad to think about leaving the country where you have all your history, roots, family and friends, until you realize that spreading your roots is so rewarding.

Almost two years ago, I made the decision to find a better place to discover the future and a better quality of life. I arrived in Miami convinced that I would achieve all of my dreams. Thankfully, I was right! This has been the best decision of my life. One of my dreams was to learn to speak English. Although most people speak Spanish in Miami, speaking English helps you to build your aspirations up more rapidly. English is a universal tool that can help me achieve a lot of my goals.

Therefore, I started a long and extensive search for the most suitable institution to learn English. Finally, I found the ELI, an honorable institute. It attracted me for its great environment, high recognition among former students, and the best selection of professors that have the patience and talent to bring forth their knowledge. This institute and the people in it bring the possibility of reviving many dreams that could have been lost. For instance, getting a college degree or having successful experiences that can be used for future situations is quite feasible for the students here.

I began to study at the ELI last summer, and the result after completing only a few levels has been incredible. My life has not been the same since I began studying here. I never thought that I could learn so much in such a short time. It is astonishing that I barely spoke a word in English, and now I can maintain a conversation, watch a movie, read books and contracts, and go to the bank feeling comfortable and confident.

Here, I have found my second home; I have had the opportunity to engage with lovely people from around the world who have become my friends. For this reason, I have to say “thank you” for making me feel happy again and for the opportunity to learn among such wonderful people.

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Last semester, I was one of the scholarship winners. By the time I had the opportunity to apply for it, this opportunity had become a goal for me. To win implied that I had to have very good grades, was highlighted over other students, demonstrated effort, I was really worthy of this benefit. This achievement would not have been possible without the support of my teachers, especially Miss Margaret Lowry and Miss Laura Lamour. It goes without saying that the scholarship has been a huge help for me economically, but it has mainly represented an inspiration to continue developing my English language, keeping my good grades and improving every day.

I will be grateful to God for the rest of my life for allowing me to have the opportunity to meet all these amazing people that have created a precedent in my life. This experience has allowed me to improve my confidence and bring me knowledge and courage to go to the university and begin this new chapter in my life. In the coming months, I will apply to FIU to get my degree in Dietetics and Nutrition. Hopefully, this new stage of my life will complete one of my main goals.

The True Meaning of Friendship

Have you ever thought of how hard it is to build a real friendship in a short time? Maria Claudia and I never imagined that we would be able to share such great times together and have so much fun (although we often don't agree). Our friendship began with a simple night out to dinner in a popular place in Miami Beach. From then on, we have gone out practically every weekend. Planning a new adventure has become our lifestyle. Touring many places around Miami has made our relationship stronger than ever. Although it has only been a year since we met, we want to continue building our relationship as we have been doing during this time. You won't find a better best friend than mine; she is taken!

Snapchat Corner
Before I left my country, I was really nervous and excited at the same time because it was my first time being out of my country educational system, but you know what? It was the best decision I have ever made! My mother always told me: “If you want to be successful, you have to get out of your comfort zone and take risks to find opportunities.” Let me tell you a short story about how I came to attend the ELI. Venezuela, where I come from, has been going through a difficult political situation. Because of that, a lot of people from Venezuela are escaping to other countries looking for better opportunities in order to have a better life. My goal was reached in the United States, Why? Well, certain people said that it is the country of opportunities; therefore, I decided to give it a try. However, it was necessary to improve my English, so a friend who is studying at FIU told me that her cousin had studied at the ELI, and she introduced her to me. Right after that, I looked up information about it and enrolled in it.

My first semester was Fall 2014, and it was awesome and very productive. I met a lot of people from all over the world, and I learned about their cultures and customs. Even though the ELI is an accredited institution whose goal is to encourage the appropriate use of English, it is a place where professors, students, and staff can have a lot amusing moments not only within the classroom or office but also outside of them. For instance, we have gone bowling, visited Santa’s Enchanted Forest, danced at the Halloween party, and eaten at the Thanksgiving Lunch, where we shared and tasted plates from various cultures. I am very surprised at how I was able to get along with my classmates so quickly because I am very shy. Sometimes I felt nervous when I started a conversation with someone because I was afraid that I would say something that might bother that person. However, as time has passed, that fear has subsided and my shyness disappeared.

This is my second semester at the ELI, and I think it will be my last but the best one. The reason is very simple. It is the perfect time to keep moving forward because I finally got my undergraduate degree. As a result, I am able to begin my graduate degree in order to get my CPA, which is one of my professional goals. The experience of receiving my degree was one of the most emotional moments of my life. I went to Venezuela for a couple of days, and I was reunited with my relatives and friends. Although I was there for a short time, the moments spent with them were unforgettable. They were with me at each event related to the graduation. The first event was the signing of graduation documents, which states that the person finished all the subjects, and he/she has satisfied all the requirements. On that day, I found out that I got the best grades among my peers. In other words, among all those who graduated with me. I did not expect that, and my family and friends were very proud of me. The second event consisted of a mass where God blessed all the graduates. On that day, I prayed for my family, my friends, and my country. Also, I prayed to God to give me strength, knowledge, and health to make wise decisions which will allow me to reach my goals. The final event, which was the most important, was the conferment of the degree.

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It is amazing how your mind changes in a positive way when you have a professional status because you realize that you have a responsibility towards yourself and society to be a professional with morals and ethics. Two phrases, which were said by the principal of my university and a student, had an impact on me. The first one is: “The first day of class your backpacks were full of expectations. Now, your backpacks are full of responsibilities”. The other phrase is: “God’s timing is perfect; however, we must realize how we want to continue moving in life in order to reach that time correctly. Therefore, we must decide if we want to move swiftly, or how far we want to reach”. The last phrase is totally relative with this experience because I will reach very high thanks to the fact that I am improving my English. When I came back from Venezuela, all my friends and professors from the ELI congratulated me. I cannot deny that it was a satisfying feeling.

I would really like to thank all the professors at the ELI, not only for helping me polish my English but also for being who they are. They do not show different attitudes inside or outside the classroom. Each professor has his/her own and unique manner of teaching, which is not boring at all. In some classes, I have laughed a lot, especially with Mr. Sanchez, Ms. Laura, Mr. John, Ms. Renata, and Mr. Larry. I like that because it makes feel like even when I am in a learning environment, I can still have fun.