

## A Journey Across the Globe

Maria Avellaneda is an EOP student who returned this past summer from an experience she describes as a dream come true.

“I just dreamt of these places, I never actually expected to be there and actually see the Eiffel Tower light up at sunset.” Avellaneda said. “It was amazing.”

Avellaneda is a junior pursuing a double major degree in Criminology and Spanish, and is one of the few students who seizes the opportunity every year to participate in the university’s Study Abroad Program.

The program allows students to study in 24 different countries for either a semester, a year, or during the summer.

Over the course of 10 months, Avellaneda took 10 classes at a university in Spain during the 2006-2007 semesters.

All the places Avellaneda only dreamt of visiting became reality.

While in Spain, she trekked to seven different countries.

“I traveled a lot,” she said. “I went to Ireland, London, Morocco, Italy, France, Germany, and Paris.”

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Before she began her voyage abroad, there were a few things she had to take care of at home.

First, she had to prove that she understood the language by taking two Spanish classes, even though she is a native speaker of Spanish.

Next, she had to get letters from two professors, one of whom had to be a Spanish professor.

“I needed to get recommendation letters so I needed to make sure I got to know my professors really well,” Avellaneda said.

Finances, although important, were a mild concern for



Maria Avellaneda traveled to over seven countries while studying abroad in Spain.

Avellaneda, who used financial aid, loans, and money saved through hard work to finance her voyage.

“Do not allow money to be an issue in your plans and goals in life, because if you put money as the first obstacle, you’ll never do anything,” she said.

She estimates total expenses to be around \$10,000, much of which she spent on traveling and says it was more than worth the money spent.

The \$10,000 included tuition, housing, living expenses, and entertainment. And she didn’t live a shabby lifestyle either.

Avellaneda stayed in a four-bedroom apartment, near the university, with three other girls where she paid about \$300 per month for rent and utilities.

She compares the experience to no other and said she gained a new appreciation and learned so much about other countries and cultures.

“One of the main things I learned is how we as Americans need to understand that there are other countries out there, other people out there, it’s not just about the U.S. and Americans,” Avellaneda said. “What I experienced was life changing.”

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## Three Million Americans Participate in Make A Difference Day 2007

Individuals and groups across the country, including Fresno State administrators, staff, and students, got involved in a national day of helping others.

October 27 marked the celebration of Make a Difference Day and neighbors helping neighbors.

Three million Americans participated in thousands of projects for the benefit of others.

Created by USA WEEKEND Magazine, Make A Difference Day is an annual event that takes place on the fourth Saturday in October.

Participants across America and the U.K. spent time visiting seniors, reading to children, building homes, cleaning trash from parks, landscaping, and performing countless other acts of good will.

EOP counselors, administrators, and student staff did their part to make a difference by planting plants and painting street posts in Old Town Clovis.

EOP Team Leader, Antonio Renteria, said he thought it was a good idea to volunteer and beautify the community.

“I hardly do community service so I thought this was the



EOP administrators, staff, and students in Old Town Clovis.

perfect opportunity,” Renteria said. “And when I found out my co-workers were going to do it too, I thought I’d join them.”

This was the spirit of the 3 million Americans that all did their part to make a difference.



Dr. Vuong and EOP team joined “Time Out” at Home Coming Event.

Being a student at Fresno State brings new adventures and challenges at the same time. It is important to stay connected with EOP and to further develop your relationships with your professors and counselors. I’m very interested in learning about the experiences of first-generation college students. In fact, for my dissertation, I conducted a study that involved five CSU campuses to look at how self-efficacy affects academic performance. My findings suggest that those students who have high self-efficacy or belief that they CAN do

## Believe...Persist...and Succeed!

The EOP team looks forward to working with you. I encourage you to continue to meet with your counselor and peer mentor. You are extremely fortunate to be working with a dedicated and committed group of professionals who often go beyond their duties to make sure you succeed at Fresno State.

well in school DO better than those students who have low self-efficacy. In addition, those students who use campus resources like EOP, tutoring, asking questions in classes, etc. are more likely to be successful than those students who do not do those things. Having the belief and confidence in your academic ability is one of the key factors to successfully graduate from Fresno State. So how do you increase your self-efficacy so you can graduate in a timely manner? Surround yourself with people who can support you and believe in you. Everyone at EOP believes in you and your potentials. Continue to ask questions...take advantage of every opportunity that Fresno State and EOP provide!

Good luck on your finals! Have a safe and happy holiday break!

Dr. Mui Vuong  
EOP Interim Director

### JOURNEY from page 1

Now that she is back, Avellaneda is pursuing her ultimate goal.

“My plans are to become a foreign language specialist FBI agent,” she said. A foreign specialist FBI agent specializes in working with countries that speak Spanish,” she said.

She considers herself a dedicated student and is committed to obtaining her degree and fulfilling her requirements as an EOP student.

“I like that EOP requires you to see your counselor,” Avellaneda said. “Even though you don’t think there’s anything to talk to your counselor about, there are always new things going on and new changes.”

Avellaneda’s ultimate advice to students is to go for what you want and don’t let anything stand in your way and that advice has paid off big for her.

# Driven to Succeed

There are some people that are just born to excel and Bao Xiong is one of them.

Xiong is a Hmong descendant who was born in a Thailand refugee camp and came to the United States at the age of five.

One of five children, Xiong is the first person in her family to attend college.

A graduate of Duncan Polytechnical High School, Xiong was class valedictorian in 2005, maintained a 4.0 GPA, and also served as the senior class vice president.

Now a junior, Liberal Studies major at Fresno State, Xiong continues to excel.

She still maintains a 4.0, and is an active member of the Hmong Student Association (HAS) at Fresno State.

She attributes her academic success to hard work and studying.

“I study whenever I have time,” Xiong said. “It’s work in the morning, then class in the afternoon, and when I go home, it’s homework until I go to sleep.”

Xiong added that her participation in HSA is extremely important to her.

“It’s important to me because I expected to get help from my community when I needed it,” Xiong said. “So now in return, I need to help them when they need it.”

Xiong is also a participant in the California Teaching Fellows Program. As a teaching fellow, she has been interning as a California high school exit exam math tutor at JE Young Academy for the past two years.

A short term career goal that Xiong hopes to achieve is to

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**“Don’t let fear stand in your way of becoming someone.”**

Bao Xiong

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Bao Xiong maintains a 4.0 and passed the CBEST while in high school.

earn her degree in Liberal Arts, obtain her credential, and then teach in the Fresno Unified School District.

She is well on her way. More than halfway through her program, Xiong passed the CBEST in high school and is well on her way to success.

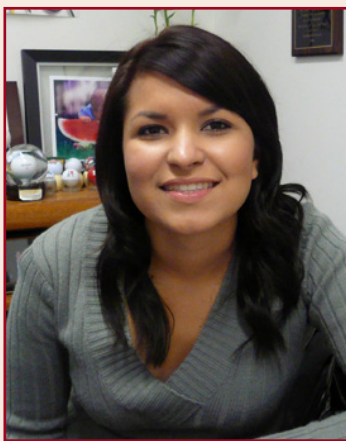
Ultimately, she hopes to return to school and earn her Masters Degree in Counseling or Administration Supervision.

Aside from working and studying, Xiong has other interests.

“I love to cook Asian foods....I also love to grow and care for various plants,” she said.

Xiong’s defining message to students and any one who has a dream is simple.

“Don’t let fear stand in your way of becoming someone,” she said. “Let life’s challenges change and shape who you will become.”



Patricia Gallardo recently completed an internship with EOP

from Reedley Community College.

While at Fresno State, Gallardo has earned and maintained a 3.8 GPA which she attributes to hard work and dedication.

Gallardo worked with second year students as a Team

## Moving Through, Moving On

Moving in, moving through, and moving on—that’s exactly what Patricia Gallardo did, a Social Work major completing her internship with EOP.

Gallardo comes from a Mexican migrant family and is the first person in her family to attend college.

She transferred to Fresno State as a first-generation college student in 2005, after earning her Associate Degree

Leader for one semester, and with third year students as an Undergraduate Intern for the second semester of her internship.

Gallardo describes her internship as a great experience. She said she received a lot of support and learned how to build rapport with students, develop and facilitate workshops, and navigate through the CSU system.

“I really enjoy being able to help students,” Gallardo said. “The EOP staff has been very supportive and willing to help if I have any questions.”

In her spare time, Gallardo enjoys spending time with family and friends, reading, listening to music, and shopping.

Gallardo will complete her undergraduate degree this semester and plans on earning her masters degree. Her ultimate goal is the become a high school counselor.

She models her educational ideals after the great English philosopher, Herbert Spencer.

“The great aim of education in not knowledge, but action,” Gallardo said.

# Moving Higher Up, Through Higher Ed



EOP intern Maria Ponce plans to earn her Masters Degree in Counseling and a Pupil Personnel Services Credential

The attainment of higher education is a long journey that few choose to embark on.

Maria Ponce always knew that the journey was well worth it.

Graduating from high school in three years, with a 4.0 GPA at the age of 16, Ponce has been on the road to success every since.

She is a first-generation college student and believes that education is the best way to achieve goals and make differences in others' lives.

Ponce completed an undergraduate internship with EOP this semester and describes her experience at Fresno State as a great one.

"My experience has been very positive," Ponce said. "EOP has allowed me to implement the knowledge that I've gained through context and hands-on experience in my education."

She believes that EOP has also given her the skills needed to grow as a professional, as well as helped her to define her long term goals.

Those goals include earning a Masters

Degree in Counseling, a Pupil Personnel Services Credential, and eventually becoming a counselor at the high school or college.

Aside from being an exceptional student with a 3.7 campus GPA, Ponce is also involved in the community.

She has been a volunteer at the Catholic television station, channel 49, for more than ten years, and is also a member of the campus organization, Trabajadores de la Raza.

When Ponce is not studying or performing community service, she is busy caring her five-year old son and being a wife. She also enjoys reading, listening to Christian music, and spending time with her family.

Ponce's ultimate words of wisdom are to believe in yourself.

"When you believe in yourself," she said. "You can achieve anything."

## Fall 2007 EOP Bowl-A-Thon



*Happy Holidays*  
from the EOP Staff

# Writing the Personal Statement: Top 10 Rules and Pitfalls

## Writing the Personal Statement: Top 10 Rules

1. Strive for depth rather than breadth. Narrow focus to one or two key themes, ideas or experiences
2. Try to tell the reader something that no other applicant will be able to say
3. Provide the reader with insight into what drives you
4. Be yourself, not the 'ideal' applicant
5. Get creative and imaginative in the opening remarks, but make sure it's something that no one else could write
6. Address the school's unique features that interest you
7. Focus on the affirmative in the personal statement; consider an addendum to explain deficiencies or blemishes
8. Evaluate experiences, rather than describe them
9. Proofread carefully for grammar, syntax, punctuation, word usage, and style
10. Use readable fonts, typeface, and conventional spacing and margins

## Writing the Personal Statement: Top 10 Pitfalls

1. Do not submit an expository resume; avoid repeating information found elsewhere on the application
2. Do not complain or whine about the "system" or circumstances in your life
3. Do not preach to your reader. You can express opinions, but do not come across as fanatical or extreme
4. Do not talk about money as a motivator
5. Do not discuss your minority status or disadvantaged background unless you have a compelling and unique story that relates to it
6. Do not remind the school of its rankings or tell them how good they are
7. Do not use boring clichéd intros or conclusions  
"Allow me to introduce myself. My name is..."  
"This question asks me to discuss..."  
"I would like to thank the admissions committee for considering my application."  
"It is my sincere hope that you will grant me the opportunity to attend your fine school."  
"In sum, there are three reasons why you should admit me..."
8. Do not use unconventional and gimmicky formats and packages
9. Do not submit supplemental materials unless they are requested
10. Do not get the name of the school wrong
11. Do not incorporate technical language or very uncommon words

# Final Exams Tips

Follow these suggestions and you'll be better prepared for your final exams:

## Before the Exam

- Review early, while material is still fresh in your mind.
- The first reading of the material should be followed by a break of several hours before reading the material a second time.
- Predict exam questions using textbook headings, class notes, and previous quizzes and exams.
- Several days before the final exam, plan to cover all of the term's material at least four or five times.
- The last study session should be spent looking over the material of the whole course.
- Review the main points, especially those you find most difficult to recall.
- Go through the main headings of the text or your notes and see if you can remember the content.
- For the week before and during exams, life should be as normal as possible and normal habits of sleeping, eating, and exercising should be maintained.
- Get lots of rest. A clear head is important for the successful taking of exams.

## The Day of the Exam

- Eat a nutritious breakfast (or meal) before the exam.
- Arrive early and choose a seat where latecomers will not disturb you. Do not sit by a window or next to the door; you will be distracted and will lose your train of thought.
- Look over the entire exam to see how long it is, which parts count more in scoring, or which parts may be easier to answer or require more time.
- Answer the easy questions first! Attack only one question at a time without worrying about the ones to come.
- Outline before answering essay questions.
- Leave a few minutes at the end to review your answers. Do not second-guess your answers to multiple-choice questions; your initial "hunch" is usually right.

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Stewart, Mark Alan. Perfect Personal Statements. New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan, 1996.

# Meet your EOP Counselors

## 1st & 2nd Year Unit Counselors



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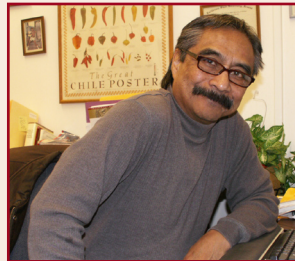


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**Back Row (Left to Right):**  
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Bonita Gomez, Hector Amador,  
Antonio Renteria, Maria Ponce,  
Suzie Moreno, Abel Blanco

**Middle Row:**  
Lauren Perkins, Rosy Lopez,  
Marisela Lara, Maria Torres,  
Claudia Rangel, Florida Noble,  
Mariana Alcala, Patricia Gallardo,  
Marine Krdanyan

**Front Row:**  
Cecilia Ruvalcaba, Carmen  
Lopez, Kristina Hernandez,  
Casimiro Llamas, Kevin Lee

## Mission Statement

The Educational Opportunity Program is designed to provide university access and retention services to students with academic and personal potential from historically low income and educational disadvantaged backgrounds. The program delivers services which empower students to complete their educational and professional goals.

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Editor's Note - The opinions in this paper are not necessarily those of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) or staff.

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