



A Personal Path: UC Berkeley Employees Share Their Stories

A Life Learning Journey

By Esther Chang, Award Analyst
Extramural Funds Accounting

Before I came to North America in 1992, I had never really written an essay or even a memo in English. I had to struggle with my English speaking and writing skills when I started working for UC Berkeley in 1997. My manager introduced me to literacy and skills project, a basic skills tutoring program for staff – the CALS Project, which has been sponsored and supported by the Office of the VC of Business and Administration Services (currently is it the Office of the VC Administration). I had joined the CALS Project as a learner for a few years until two years ago, when my excellent tutor retired. The CALS Project helped my communication skills, my career, and built up my confidence. It is an excellent service that helps many employees in many ways.

Initially, I joined the CALS Project with the intention to work on my speech so that others could understand me, but I've gained so much more! Now, I can clearly express my ideas and write proposals with solutions to work projects. I truly appreciate the University for implementing and supporting this project, as

For those of you who are planning, or are in the process of developing further your career here at UC Berkeley, I'm offering these tips:

- ▶ Find a mentor
- ▶ Plan ahead: life is a journey, where would you like to go?
- ▶ Seek ways to improve your skills and learn new ones
- ▶ Be proactive: find an opportunity, don't wait for it to find you!



Esther Chang

well as the coordinators, my bosses, and everyone who have supported and encouraged me along the way. I especially would like to thank my tutor, who helped me in improving my communication, organizing, and analyzing skills. My tutor is a very thoughtful person. He allowed me to work on my own pace. He gave advices, but let me made my own decisions and kept my writing style. He taught me how to deal with difficult people, how to be thoughtful and open-minded. My tutor even helps whenever I experience personal crises. He is not only my tutor,

but also my mentor and a very good friend after all these years.

I started as a casual (not a career position) Administrative Assistant II at the University in 1997. Today, I am working full time as an Accountant II (Award Analyst) at the Extramural Funds Accounting Office. I have been taking college level classes for years to enrich my knowledge and working skills. My goal was to receive a bachelor degree. With a stronger sense of competence, I wanted to prepare myself to take on more complex

responsibilities and serving others.

I learned that the University of San Francisco offered an Applied Economics program. I thought it would be a great opportunity to develop my professional skills and achieve my personal goals. I applied and was accepted in the program! By receiving an initial alumni scholarship in addition with partial financial support from the former campus's Career Development Opportunity Program (CDOP), I am now completing the program and will graduate in August 2006. In the mean time, I am also completing

a Business Administrative Certificate from UC Extension. In May, I attended a four day management skill training in the Business Officer Institute (BOI), which is sponsored by the University of California, Office of the President. In August, I will enroll in the Financial Management Certificate Program (FMCP) to continue improving my supervisory and management skills. The FMCP is also sponsored by the Vice Chancellor of Budget & Finance specifically for current and future business officers on the Berkeley campus.

I feel so lucky to be a member of the University community and am grateful for having variety of training and development opportunities available to me over the past nine years, while working at the University of California. I always believe that life is a learning journey. It provides us with plenty of opportunities to develop skills and to improve the quality of our lives. ▼

