

PFF Program Alumni Spotlight - Dr. Aiye Liang



Aiye is currently a Postdoctoral Associate in the Department of Medicinal Chemistry, School of Pharmacy and the Institute for Structural Biology and Drug Discovery. She started her Postdoctoral Training in June 2006 at VCU. She was awarded her PFF Program Certificate of Achievement during the 2009-2010 academic year.

Aiye received her Ph.D degree in Analytical Chemistry from Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics, Chinese Academy of Sciences in 2006.

What does “Preparing Future Faculty Program” mean to you?

When I heard the “Preparing Future Faculty Program” my immediate thought was: This program is dedicated to preparing future teachers, which is what I want to be in the future. That is why I enrolled in the program.

How did your experiences in the PFF Program enhance your understanding of what it means to be faculty and impact your plans for a career in academia?

Before I took the PFF Program, I thought being faculty meant to be a teacher who teaches courses in the classroom, a researcher who does or guides students to do research in the lab (at least for a chemistry major), and writes proposals to support his or her research. Now I understand that faculty not only do teaching and scholarship (research and grants), but also have to do service. They need to contribute to departmental and university governance, and provide service to the department, community, university and to his or her profession. My PFF Program experience makes me aware of how I can find a faculty position and what I should do when I am a faculty. I am more confident I will choose a career in academia.

How did experiences with the PFF Program and receipt of the PFF Program Certificate of Achievement give you an ‘edge’ in your career?

I am in the process of applying for a faculty position. I think the experiences with the PFF Program and PFF Program Certificate of Achievement will enhance my opportunity of getting a faculty position. I have a lot to say about my teaching experience in my CV or during interviews because I had a lot of teaching experiences during the GRAD606 Internship/Externship in Professional Teaching. And if by chance I am one of the few applicants to have had an experience like this, I will have set myself apart from the crowd because universities want to hire a faculty with teaching experiences.

The capstone experience of the PFF Program is the internship/externship in which the student is mentored by a senior faculty member. Tell us a little bit about your internship/externship experience, and share with us the impact that the project and the mentoring relationship had on you.

For the Internship in Professional Teaching, I took one credit by teaching a team-taught professional level large course (130 students) MEDC 527 Enzyme Action and Inhibition for the Basic Principles of Pharmaceutical Sciences at VCU under the guidance of Professor Umesh R. Desai. With the remaining two credits I taught a smaller college level class (24 students): CHM 111 College Chemistry I at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, under the guidance of Dr. Ann Sullivan. The two different projects and two mentors made my teaching experience complete. I had experience in lecturing diverse populations of students, and supervising and organizing labs. Both Drs. Desai and Sullivan are excellent teachers, though their teaching styles are different. I found out that both really love to teach, and they devote themselves to teaching. I think that must be one of the reasons why they are good teachers! They have taught me how to teach and how to be a good teacher. They also shared their teaching experiences with me.

I love to spend time with my students, and I love to teach more than ever. Most importantly, I obtained practical experience by planning for and participating in the team-taught professional level course and college level course. I learned how to prepare for the lab, how to prepare for and deliver the lectures, how to test students, and how internet can help my teaching. By finishing these projects, I feel confident that I can find a faculty position and I can be a good teacher.

What is the most crucial piece of advice that you would give to students currently enrolled in the PFF Program coursework?

You should take the GRAD606 Internship/Externship in Professional Teaching. Though it will take a lot of effort to finish the 150 hours of college teaching, it is worth the effort. The reward is more than what you can imagine.