

PFF Program Alumni Spotlight: Yui Matsuda , Ph.D. in Nursing candidate



Yui is a doctoral student in nursing and is concurrently completing a Master of Public Health degree. She lived in Japan until 2001 when she came to the United States to attend Liberty University, and received her BS in nursing in 2005. She is currently a teaching assistant for the Department of Family and Community Health Nursing in the School of Nursing at VCU. Yui completed her Preparing Future Faculty curriculum in fall 2011.

What does the “Preparing Future Faculty Program” mean to you? When you hear the program’s name, what are some of your immediate thoughts/reflections/memories?

“Jeff and Britt” is the first thing I thought of. I acknowledge and thank all the great professors who taught and led the course. However, I feel that GRAD 602 that Jeff and Britt led was unique, and made me think about being faculty and teaching from different perspectives.

The mission of the PFF Program is to examine the question “What does it really mean to be faculty?” 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?

I think the courses which were integrated with internships have helped me see what it is like to be faculty and made me think about my future. I am particularly thankful for my mentor faculty, Dr. Jacqueline McGrath at the School of Nursing, who understood the objectives of the internship and gave me opportunities to come to grant review meetings, join faculty/committee meetings, and help me learn about the tenure-review process. Those experiences have aided me to further learn and expose myself to the types of things I may do and think about as faculty.

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

I think the experiences I gained from the PFF Program have helped me understand further what being on a faculty entails, and knowing what I am signing up for is really important before I actually sign it up.

While the focus of the doctoral courses is on research, this Certificate of Completion demonstrates that I have made an effort to learn about teaching. The courses covered, including balancing personal and work life, use of technology in academia, information about job search, etc., and all of these

topics are important to consider, but may not be covered elsewhere. I feel that the Program has given me an opportunity to further look into what it is to be faculty and has given me a better idea about what I am going into.

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.

The internship experience was very valuable, because it integrated what I have learned in the coursework. In addition to giving a lecture, my faculty mentor, Dr. Jacqueline McGrath, has given me opportunities to join grant review meetings, faculty/committee meetings, and helped me learn about the tenure-review process. We also had dialogs about expectations for new faculty, and she shared with me her experiences at different schools where she has worked. Dr. McGrath has been my advisor for 4 years; therefore our relationship did not start at the internship. Through learning from her and working with her, I have learned what it is like to be faculty and a mentor, and I am grateful to have a mentor like Dr. McGrath. She has a quote on the bottom of her e-mail: “Some people will blow out your candle to make theirs shine brighter... I will lend you my candle to help yours burn”. I believe that this quote truly reflects who she is and cannot thank her enough for helping mine burn.

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

I would advise them to choose the faculty mentor who understands them and will give them opportunities to maximize their internship experience.

Go to the PFF Program’s “Resources” page:

<http://www.graduate.vcu.edu/programs/pff/resources.html> to read previous Alumni Spotlights.