April 30, 2012

Reflect, Celebrate, and Recognize

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by Cristobal Salinas Jr.  
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An academic year and another page of a chapter come to an end. Most students are excited to complete another semester, another academic year, while others are proud of earning a degree. It’s not only the end, but the beginning of your future.

It is time to celebrate the end of a special stage in your life. Time to say good-bye to great friends and teachers, to whom you should be thankful for their support. You shared with them unforgettable memories, tears, laughter, and challenges.

Remember the first time you enrolled for classes? Filled with emotions of happiness, curiosities, and the unexpected?

Finally, you enter the classroom, you sit down next to your classmates, without knowing that you would share great moments for a semester. A few left, others joined the journey and became part of the learning community. At the end of the semester, thankful for your professor’s guidance, you left that class challenged, supported, and more knowledgeable than before.

Your family and friends, provided support by showing you respect, love, encouragement, and sometimes-financial support. Thank them for allowing you to accomplish your goals and providing you with the opportunity to pursue your professional dreams.

A message to those students that will return to the world of academics: take advantage of the opportunities, enjoy your educational career! Take care of your school and environment, because it is a second home.

It is time to reflect, celebrate and recognize your challenges and accomplishments. Reflecting, is an intentional questioning of an idea, a topic, or a situation in life. When reflecting, you should ask yourself questions about your current understanding; how that impacts your behavior, how your behavior impacts other individuals and your own self-image. It is important, because there is always room for improvement – and how do we recognize self-growth if we do not pay attention?

My practice has always been to reflect on my own personal experiences, on issues often thought and not discussed, situations often forgotten and populations that are underrepresented. In essence, what I call “learning”. I am a new student affairs professional who believes in expression and reflection; for a contrite heart and mind is clouded and less productive.

As I reflect on my 2011-2012 academic year, I learned:

- To be self-confident inside and outside of the classroom,
- Be aware of the environment: how I affect the environment, and how the environment affects me,
- Engage in conversation and be aware of what is going on around my community and the world,
• Continue to think and reflect on my professional and personal goals,
• Challenge things that I am passionate about,
• Be intentional at all times,
• Ask rather than assume,
• Listen rather than hear,
• Try to understand my decisions,
• Try to understand my influences and,
• Continue to be a learner and a leader.

An Educated Latina Reflection: What is one of the most important things you learned this year?

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