

## **How FACAA Scholarships can lead you to Professional Development**

I was one of the luckiest 14 people who receive a FACAA Educational Foundation Scholarship to attend my very first National ESP Conference after 9 years in Extension.

The 2019 National ESP Conference was hosted by The Colorado Zeta Chapter in Colorado Springs. This conference was so friendly and inviting to any new members even before day one.

I received an email from another colleague from same ESP association but in another state. She was informative and invited me to meet at the conference, so refreshing, making friends even before your arrival.

During the first day, there was a networking opportunity for first timers where all mentors met in person with their mentees. Additionally, I got to meet numerous Cooperative Extension members from every state and every field of work. I met more national colleagues from FCS, 4-H, horticulture and community development in 2 hours than in entire other conferences. Such a great idea!

I also participated in the Opening Session, where the speakers are so thrilling that it makes you feel the fire of your persona at personal and professional levels. We held hands and screams "I love my life and I love what I do". We also got to recite together the Extension Professionals Creed. In between sessions, I was able to learn from several posters on rural online initiatives, community development and youth Latino entrepreneurship initiatives in West Coast Extension programming.

A very interesting session was about inclusion in the work environment. We need respect, clear expectations, an opportunity to grow and recognition and validation in each institution/county office. In addition of the impact of culture change through employee feedback.

I was able to attend the National ESP Professional Committee and provide suggestions for future initiatives, I would like to be more involved from our state level now.

Nor only that, I am happy to report that UF will be present at National Latino Affinity Initiative within ESP National Conference. This initiative is in between leadership changes, which allows newer members to be involved. There is a great expectation to keep working and growing together to broaden our services to all minority communities nationwide.

Finally, I was able to meet UF faculty that were in Extension almost same or more years than I am working at UF. We all had an improvised state out dinner and learn more about what we do.

Thanks to FACAA scholarship for allowing me to participate in this National Conference, I wish UF/IFAS Extension professionals get to enjoy at least once an ESP National Conference. This brings other perspectives to our work and remind us of the great work all Extension professionals do, one day at the time, every day for everyone in every state of US.

Respectfully,

E. Vanessa Campoverde

