

## **NJCU's Jeffrey Aizprua Thinks Outside the Box To Chart a Personal Path to Success While Bringing Success to Others**

Jeffrey Aizprua's life journey has taken him from Ecuador to Jersey City with more than a few detours along the way. Guided by a keen vision of opportunity, a personal plan for achievement, and a deep-rooted desire to help others while advancing his goals for personal success, the dynamic New Jersey City University (NJCU) honors student is charting a course that points to a future of leadership and success.

The NJCU senior, who resides in West New York, recently returned from Beijing where he completed a semester-long study abroad experience as a Presidential Scholar. Mr. Aizprua honed his intermediate-level Mandarin skills at Minzu University, explored China in the global economy at Peking University, and spent weekends on cultural excursions to enrich his international experience.

Thanks to an \$8,000 Presidential Scholarship awarded for the spring semester, the enterprising undergraduate expanded his horizon far beyond personal expectation. The 34-year-old fulltime NJCU student double majoring in economics and math, savored every moment of his classroom experiences, but found his networking and friendship with faculty and students equally enriching. As Mr. Aizprua's commitment to helping others deepened his reputation as a talented coach of English language and American cultural customs grew.

He noted that eight hours of course work followed by countless hours of conversation in Mandarin or English was exhausting but also exhilarating.

"The experience strengthened my commitment to helping others. Students and faculty wanted to practice English to improve their chances for admission to study in universities in Europe or the U.S.," Mr. Aizprua said. "I wanted to help them. I felt an obligation. You have a responsibility to help people when life pays you back. It's good to have a purpose in life," Mr. Aizprua explained.

"I look at myself and know that sometimes students need help or encouragement and they can succeed," he added.

NJCU President Sue Henderson agrees wholeheartedly with Mr. Aizprua's equation for success.

"Jeff is a remarkably talented student who has the ability to see the bigger picture while setting life goals, planning a path to achieving those goals, and ultimately succeeding while bringing success to others. He thinks globally, outside the box."

Dr. Henderson was instrumental in awarding a Presidential Scholarship to Mr. Aizprua. "Jeff wanted desperately to study in China. He saw that the scholarship would enable him to immerse himself in a new culture, earn academic credits, and, very importantly, take advantage of invaluable networking. Jeff saw the implications the visit would have on his future success both personally and professionally. He was also an ambassador for NJCU on the other side of the globe."

In 1995, Mr. Aizprua left Ecuador to seek opportunity in the United States and provide for his mother and siblings. He had attended university for one year and had a basic knowledge of English when he arrived in the U.S. as a 19-year-old. Mr. Aizprua became fluent in English and acquired a basic knowledge of Portuguese, and found employment at a trucking firm where he worked his way up from an entry-level job to a regional manager's position. When the company faced financial difficulty and his job was eliminated, Mr. Aizprua began teaching at the UCEDA English Institute in West New York, where he taught English to immigrants from all parts of the world.

"I taught English to immigrants who had never known opportunity, but hoped to better their lives by learning the language. I told my students that with a lot of patience and believing that the best can happen, it will," he recalled.

Mr. Aizprua followed his advice and enrolled for fulltime study at NJCU. He envisions earning a master's degree and eventually a doctorate. His journey continues.

## **NJCU Program Builds Success through Opportunity**

Since 1968, more than 5,000 students have realized their own American Dreams at New Jersey City University (NJCU) through the Opportunity Scholarship Program (OSP), the name by which the Educational Opportunity Fund program is known at NJCU.

Many alumni of the OSP program have gone on to pursue graduate degrees and meaningful careers. Throughout their undergraduate years, OSP students receive mentoring and encouragement through counseling, tutoring, special events and a program that focuses on individual needs. The combination of personal focus and mentoring is highly effective. OSP students succeed, overcoming financial and academic adversity to graduate and launch meaningful careers.

For example, OSP graduate Abraham Lopez (Class of 2010), the present Executive Director of the New Jersey Center for Hispanic Policy, Research and Development, was appointed to that position by Governor Chris Christie following a career in which he held several political positions devoted to the success of Hispanic individuals.

Having experienced an excellent education at NJCU, many OSP graduates go on to succeed in personally rewarding professional careers in various fields of education.

Both Jesse Thatcher (Class of 1995) and Louis Gallo (Class of 1982) earned master's degrees and now teach at the University Academic Charter High School in Jersey City, and as adjunct professors. Christina Rolon (Class of 2006) is the Program Counselor on campus for the Learning Communities (TLC), a department headed by former OSP student Woodrow Lewis (Class of 1999). Sharif Battle (Class of 2013) is a Crisis Intervention Teacher at Jersey City's Ferris High School, a multi-level job that includes communication between student, parents, teachers and outside agencies. Other students are engaged in careers in social services for which their OSP/NJCU experience has prepared them.

Some OSP students, such as Christian Diaz (Class of 2013) and senior Alvert Hernandez, take on leadership roles at the University. Mr. Diaz was a former president and Mr. Hernandez is the current president of NJCU's Student Government Organization. Mr. Diaz is currently enrolled in an MBA program at NJCU, and Mr. Hernandez plans to undertake graduate studies to obtain an advanced degree in the area of student affairs.

A long-lasting bond forms between the staff and students who are part of the University's OSP undergraduate cohort. This year OSP initiated an event during its summer program through which OSP alumni volunteered to meet and interact with members of the incoming initial year class, sharing the wisdom and encouragement they experienced with the entering students. Alumni mentoring and team-building emphasize the bond that develops and endures between OSP and its students. After graduation those students, like the alumni who visited them last summer, are focused on succeeding and finding meaningful and rewarding careers.