

My experience in Aletheia University

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I am Dez, a graduate student of the Department of Religious Studies and Organization Management in Aletheia University from Cebu, Philippines. I arrived in Taiwan last September 7th 2016 and since then everyday has been a new experience for me - food, people, studies, transport system and campus life.

The moment I stepped in AU that day - I felt like a fish that found its pond. I arrived with a live band playing punky music near the sports gym. I loved the music. It was a beautiful welcome for millennial kids like me. Immediately it felt like home. I fell in love with the beautiful campus - the beautiful Presbyterian Church adorned by a manicured garden made me thanked God for nature's beauty. The fresh breeze from the seas mixed with mountain air has always been a new experience. Here in AU, the sea meets the mountain - literally.

It is a confirmation that I made the right choice for graduate studies. I would like to discover the power of religion to explain and understand people. In my humble opinion, religion and human organization are the keys to make the world a better place to live.

I had my first class in Mandarin. I was not so nervous. My Chinese teachers spoke English well so we could understand her easily, but when my friends and I tried and practice some Chinese words we were having difficulty in pronouncing it correctly. The good thing was, we were eager to learn because we got motivated because of our environment.

The second year of my stay in Taiwan as Graduate Student in Aletheia University was a very challenging one but also the birth of a mature ME. Looking back, I would be forever grateful to Aletheia University for molding me into what I am today. The experience resulted in major changes in my lifestyle, outlook in life and attitude. It was an experience filled with happy and difficult moments but which I have proven to myself that I can face challenges in life.

School became a serious endeavor for me. I learned a lot in school, as I have never learned before. It was here that I realized that I love my course. I was interested in the subjects I took and looked forward to classes. Last month I

have successfully defended my thesis proposal. The thesis journey was not easy. It was days of worries and stress. I was lucky to have a dynamic Adviser, who guided, encouraged and also scolded me along the way. He pushed me to pursue the goal with my study. Most importantly, I allowed him to push me.

In fact, on the day after the successful defense of my thesis proposal, I sat before my table and felt blank. I got lost because now I need not read as many books as I have. Studying and reading became a good habit. After going through the challenges of the thesis journey, I can truly say it was a wonderful journey.

My Professors have exerted extra efforts to speak English in our class and for this I deeply indebted. Our Professors gave us reading materials in advance to give us ample time to prepare before the class. We usually meet once a week for 2–3 hours for every subject. For me, it was not enough but I take it in a positive way. I learned to study hard, which, I did not usually do when I was in my University back in the Philippines.

I had the privilege of being a working student in the Department of Religious Culture and Organization Management. In addition, I also helped the department as a Teacher in English classes. These opportunities to work and study at the same time was a tremendous help, not only financially, but also socially. It developed my personality.

I love the food and the Taiwan culture. I traveled around Taiwan from the farthest North like Jiufen, Shifen, Yehliu, Jinguashi, Yingge. I took advantage of taking Chinese lessons in school thus, now, I have the confidence to take buses and TRA. The night markets in Shilin, Raohe and Ningxia are my favorite places where I learn to converse in Chinese.

I live in our University's dormitory. Every semester, I had new roommates and this meant new adjustments. I met new people who have become my newfound friends. The dormitory life, was for me, the best place to stay while studying.

Looking back, I will be forever grateful to my Professors, Ms. Irene, my mentor as a work kind student, my classmates, my students in English class, my friends, the bus driver, the food vendor outside school and everyone that I have encountered. Thank you for molding me into what I am today - a better version of myself.