

A Circle of Support

Life was easy for Gabriela Cordovez back home in Ecuador. She has a very supportive family that taught her many life skills and pushed her to always achieve her dreams. Gabriela knew with this support that she wanted to challenge herself to achieve more. With her family photos, favorite music, and favorite yucca breads packed, Gabriela was ready to pursue her studies at The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale in Florida.

Gabriela has a learning disability and wanted to take extra preparations for her arrival to campus to ensure a successful and enjoyable experience. The transition of arriving into a new culture and academic system can cause stress that she preferred to reduce. She found it a great challenge to stay completely focused and to retain information. At home, she never felt any struggle because her family was always very patient and supportive.

“I think that for someone with my situation, the United States offers the best support and opportunities to help me succeed.”

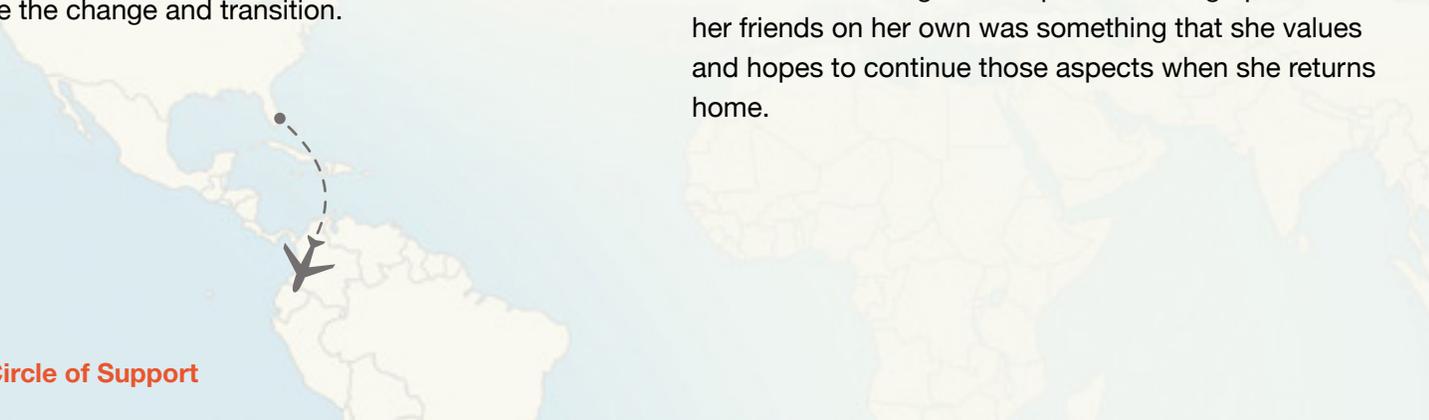
Gabriela’s parents found out about the College Living Experience (CLE) program, an organization that supports students with disabilities to successfully complete their degrees by offering instruction such as independent living skills, social skills, and academic tutoring. Her family felt that Gabriela would be better prepared with the skills that CLE would provide and support her to succeed. She learned a great deal on how to effectively handle the change and transition.

“I had my doubts about not being able to handle all these changes, but I learned it is important to not miss the big picture and focus on the result that would come at the end, which would be completing my studies and preparing myself for a bright future.”

Gabriela recalls that the first week was a bit nerve wracking, not knowing anyone, and being outside of her comfort zone. Her housing situation was challenging, since it was the first time she lived on her own and was doing everything herself. She remembers the Art Institute campus, where she is studying graphic design, as being intimidating because of the size. She quickly learned her way around though and was relieved to meet other international students at CLE that spoke Spanish. CLE also played a crucial role to support Gabriela meeting deadlines and staying on track with her studies.

“CLE helped me with time management, school support, motivation and challenged me to do my best.”

As Gabriela reflects on her first year in the United States and her most rewarding experience, it reminds her of taking public transportation for the first time with another student, as this would not have been an option for her back home. Having the independence to go places with her friends on her own was something that she values and hopes to continue those aspects when she returns home.



“I realize that the most valuable gift is the opportunity for independence that I have been given. I am able to control what I choose to do and this is a great responsibility. I am grateful to my parents for providing me with this wonderful opportunity, and I want to give back to all those that have made this possible for me.”

Gabriela’s Tip: “Proper time management between study and personal time is one of the most complicated issues to deal with as a new student. Make sure to make all necessary arrangements before arriving to the U.S. and take time to orient yourself to a new culture, community, and campus.”



Learn More about College Living Experience
experiencecle.com