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*What did you think when you arrive and why did you come to the U.S.?*

I came in 2009 when I was 18 years old. To be honest, I am from the Czech Republic and while I was there, I knew this lady from Texas. My parents ran a grocery store and she used to come there a lot. I didn’t speak English and I thought she could help me out and she offered help. I started going to her place every day to learn English. We didn’t have that available at our school. We only had French and German. I started picking things up and at the end, she suggested, “hey David, this is an opportunity – move to the states and stay with my family.” I proposed that to my parents and they approved it. They booked a ticket to the states and then I flew to Michigan. That’s how I ended up in the U.S. in the first place. I finished my senior year of high school in Michigan.

I honestly at that point realized “I love it.” I loved the people and the openness in the states and just the atmosphere. I felt like I belonged in the states and I fell in love. And then I thought, “I want to take it to the next level and do school here. I took out a map and said, where do I want to go next? Is it the west or East? I started doing research on schools and costs and I proposed that to my family and I flew to San Francisco in 2010.

*How did you find out about CCSF?*

First, I did online research – before I even thought about which school do I go to, I asked myself how much do I have? How much does my family have? How much can they afford to pay for me? Cost was a huge consideration for us. So, after doing my research and calling the schools around the Bay Area and around California, I found out that City College offered the best “Package,” for lack of a better word and cost wise and quality of education, so that’s why I decided to pursue City College.

*You arrive at CCSF (main campus), where did you start?*

I arrived July 15, 2010. I can’t forget that date. I came to the campus knowing nothing and knowing nobody there. But immediately when I came, I was introduced to a lot of folks and the advisors who helped me get around the campus. Everyone was open. What we wanted to figure out the first day was which classes I was going to begin taking in August. I took the placement test too, because out of the country, they wanted to figure out which English class to put me in. There was the orientation the first day as well – maps, where to buy books, the gym, and here is where you can socialize in terms of clubs and activities to help folks socialize and get to know each other and get resources. It was a very long day and I enjoyed every minute of it.

I was an international student and the tour and orientation was for international students and another for general students.

How did you decided on classes and business as a major?

My family and it all started with my grandpa. He is an inspiration to me. He is no longer with us, but at the same time, I think a lot of him and when I make a decision, I think about what he would say. He was a doctor and a businessman. He would say that you don’t have to pursue my career, being a doctor, but I want you to, but you don’t have to. But I want you to be a businessman. I wanted to make his dream come true and decided to pursue a career in business and specifically in marketing. When I came to CCSF, there was endless amount of focus when it came to classes and the major being offered. There were multiple programs that were designed to help us transfer to a four year college. I ended up at SFSU. The team at CCSF did a wonderful job to help us understand classes and transferring. I went to the advising center multiple times and understood what I had to take and got my classes. The team was really helpful (transfer center). They did a great job there.

*How was your CCSF experience? What was your most memorable CCSF experience?*

I would say, Susan that CCSF has been the foundation of where I am right now. The things I’ve been able to accomplish and the connections that I’ve made. I can’t recall a particular day or event that made this all happen, but I spent 2-1/2 years at CCSF and I can certainly vouch for it and a lot of other folks would be saying the same thing. In summary, a great education at an affordable price and the pricing was a consideration for me, so I appreciated that. And then just the overall connections that I was able to make which landed me a career here at Survey Monkey. I am still keeping in touch with a bunch of professors that I had – and they’re a great resource for future career and career help, such as Susan Berston. Miss Susan Berston is an awesome person who has always been my inspiration and somebody I can rely on for any type of help, so I do appreciate here help and I will always be looking up to her. In a nutshell, I enjoyed my experience at CCSF every minute and every hour. There have been challenges, but of course, nothing comes without challenges, but with my teacher and advisor, I was able to cope with all of these challenges and transfer to a career and University successfully and I have a lot of great stuff to say about CCSF and anybody who wishes to learn more, I am happy to do a sit down and share my experience and how it might relate to you particularly.

*What activities were you involved in during your 2.5 years at CCSF? What was the most valuable?*

To be honest, there are countless activities that I was involved in. I can’t say that I am always out there as much as others, but I took every opportunity I could – my first priority was connections – knowing other people. Getting out there and learning as much as I could from the experts in the field so that later on when I transitioned to a four-year university, I am going to have an easier time. And after that, career wise – right, in fact, Susan you were a big part of my job right now with all of the connections and the help I got when it comes to interview preparing. You introduced me to a bunch of folks who made a difference. You have helped so many folks and I love you. I love you for that. I was always interested in learning more about job fairs and there were plenty of opportunities at CCSF, connecting with recruiters and experts in their fields and their experiences and how it might relate to mine. We had huge soccer and basketball teams, the Rams. I am very proud of our teams. I did not play soccer for CCSF – I wish I did, but I always followed them. The other part was that I always took advantage of the tutoring services at the LAC. I think that was an awesome idea. I am sure other schools would have similar tools, but I found it extremely helpful making students understand and knowing they had the resources to succeed in their education and their career. There is a lot of things that I didn’t necessarily struggle, but there were classes where I needed help. I am not a strong physics person, especially coming from another country – especially when you have to translate all of the words in English, so I took advantage of the LAC and saw tutors and professors there who offered help at any time and at no cost. I mean, what more can you ask for? I was also an English and accounting tutor. It has been awhile, so I am still stumbling there to even remember what I did. I wanted to give back a little bit and help out the folks and get more out of the experience.

*Clubs? Yes, Susan!* You know that. Alpha Beta Gamma and Alpha Gamma Sigma. You were the advisor for ABG. So, yeah, when it comes to clubs, there are multiple clubs available at the school and the two I joined were ABG (business professional students and potentially professionals in their careers succeed and finding the right resources and folks to connect with and finding the right knowledge to help folks succeed in their career path and Susan was a big part of that. Susan was a big part of that organization there and everybody appreciated her presence there – she made a huge difference. The other one was AGS, focused on the overall – all majors at CCSF. There were always resources for folks in math, science or engineering. Anybody who needed help had at their disposal many resources. I was proud to be a member of those organizations/clubs, and I strongly recommend that everybody do the same.

*Where did you meet your best friends at CCSF?*

My parents knew Steven’s parents. Linh is someone I met here at CCSF, which is how we connected and how we are able to have the relationships that we have now. I met her randomly at the orientation, which linked us together – and other folks with whom I have stayed great friends with now.

*Tell me about your SFSU experience and how you chose SF State.*

That was a hard decision (getting into multiple schools, even received an admissions letter from UCLA and a few other universities and I took my time to really consider what the advantages were of attending a prestigious college or university – and what that would look like on my resume and for my future career. And at the same time, I was saying to myself: think about what your priorities are. They were #1- quality of education and #2 – the connections that I had at that particular school or the city. I had been living in SF for close to 7 years now. I am still in the same place. Think about the advantages about staying at SF State would give me, that includes being close to my connections and knowing all of these professors at the school and I know that I am in the Bay Area and am very close to Silicon Valley and all of these great companies that I envisioned myself working for in the long run. That was something I was not willing to forego. UC Berkeley, a wonderful school and UCLA also a fabulous university to be in. And had I gone to one of these schools, I might have been even, moved on to a different role now, or a more desired role, or it could have been the opposite, but at the end of the day, it’s all about what are you going to do with you degree? How are you going to approach opportunities and how are you going to, and what are the connections that you have? It’s all about what you do after, and not always about what school you go to. But still, it was a difficult situation to be in and I eventually saw the advantages of both worlds and you know, great schools and at the end of the day, it’s about what you do with it at the end. So, I decided to stick around SFSU and be around great people like yourself, Susan, and some of my great friends.

How did your SFSU experience compare to that of CCSF?

You know, I enjoyed my two years at SFSU. I had a wonderful experience at SFSU and the transition to SFSU from CCSF was a huge part of it. Folks always are wondering how they transfer – classes taking and what to do – but in this case, it was fluid and flawless. All I had to do was – I got the help and after all, I spent 2.5 years there. It would have been two years had I not had the surgery – scars make you stronger, I guess. Hopefully. Things that I learned from SF State is a much deeper understanding of marketing – definitely a field I wanted to go for and I connected with a lot of professionals in the marketing field and was able to extend that relationship and eventually materialize that into a career. Which is where I am now at Survey Monkey, as part of the sales and marketing team. So that was a part of it, both schools offered advantages and opportunities to pursue my career and make the most out of it.

*Tell me about the impact of CCSF in your current role at Survey Monkey. What did you takeaway from CCSF and how did it help shape you in your job today?*

I need a second to think about that. The one thing that helped me get to where I am right now that I learned from City College is communication skills. I was a very shy guy. I have always been, and I still am a shy person, but what CCSF allows me to do is interacting with folks that I don’t know – talking to a random person and eventually become their friends and colleagues. Taking communication classes and joining all of these clubs and organizations, I have been able to put myself out there and outside of comfort zone – by joining clubs and organizations – I was able to stand up and put myself out there without being afraid of how folks might perceive me – what’s this guy doing? How is he presenting? What kind of person is he? I am a lot more confident than before, and as a result, I have been offered a position here as an enterprise sales lead and new account executive and I am responsible for engaging our customers with our content. I conduct introductory calls every day – multiple calls a day – and I don’t think I would have made it without the impact that CCSF has provided for me and the communication skills that helped shape me. And again, that is the foundation of where I am right now and where I will be in the future.

*What are you doing in my day to day job? What product are you selling?*

I work for Tech Validate, a company acquired by Survey Monkey. Want my pitch? So, we are a software as a service platform that automates the process of creating custom evidence – things like case studies, testimonials, aerometric, and our customers have tried to create these materials in house, but they run into two challenges – there’s a shortage of customer evidence – could not get that because of legal and PR reasons – or a small marketing team that doesn’t have the time to go out and collect the voice of customers. We’re an enterprise solutions company as a subsidiary of Survey Monkey. Our customers range from IBM, Dell and HP and we are also working with smaller startups, 20 person companies and up to 100,000 employees. We used to be exclusively B2B and commercial, but we are expanding to serve the consumer side, or B2C.

*What can CCSF be doing better?*

Pondering. Hmmmm. Susan, I think that every company, every school, and educational institution – there is always room for improvement. No exception for City College and San Francisco State University. However, one thing I might suggest is providing a four year degree to its students. A lot of folks are going to be very intrigued about this, because I believe that if CCSF offered a four year degree, I would have stayed there. San Francisco is a great school and SFSU was a great school, but at the same time, if CCSF offered a similar degree, I would have taken advantage of that. Because that is where my foundation of success and career opportunity has been – because I wanted to take it to the next level at City College of San Francisco.