

## **Pathway Reflection Essay**

The pathway semester at George Mason University was an amalgam of different aspects of academic and cultural experiences. The first semester at Mason helped me not only improve academically but also develop myself socially. Different situations over the course of the semester helped me analyze and improve myself and enact according to the situation. This semester helped me mold myself and adjust to the differences between the cultures of the home country and the Western country. Due to the difference in the academic and social cultures between the countries, I faced many adjustment issues initially but the pathway program at Mason helped me ease through the adjustment process and overcome the difficulties.

The pathway semester at Mason helped me in both academic and cultural development. The most important aspect of this semester was socialization. Initially being a closed person, it was difficult for me to interact with peers and faculty. However, the encouragement received from the faculty and advisors motivated me to socialize and build relationships with my peers and faculty. In the first event that was conducted at INTO George Mason, i.e. the Orientation day, helped me build connections with fellow students of different cultures and nationalities. Another aspect of this semester that helped me understand the Western culture and education was the EAP 508 class, where we critically analyzed the concept of 'adjustment issues of international students'. We could catch a sight of where we stand in that situation and how it could help us face the challenges of acculturation. Thus, the pathway semester at Mason not only helped me develop my socialization skills but also develop personally.

EAP 508 course was one of the most important aspects of the pathway semester. It not only helped me get accustomed to the Western style of academic system but also taught how critically analyze a situation. We were introduced to the GCLP i.e. Graduate Classroom Language Portfolio, where we dealt with articles from various scholars on the 'Adjustment issues of international students' and critically analyzed the articles, annotated the major rhetorical elements and key concepts in the article, prepared discussion questions and led the group discussion. This helped us in personal development as well as academic development. We were also introduced to the style of writing Research Papers. The MCP i.e. Multidisciplinary Colloquium project helped us analyze the current issues in our field and write a Review of Literature as an 'insider' in our field. This has given us valuable experience of what needs to be done as a Graduate student and how we can contribute to the field.

The PROV 504 course emphasized more on the preparation for graduate study at George Mason University. It helped us develop strategies for long-term success in graduate study. We were taught how to contact an advisor, the consequences of plagiarism in the Western culture, how to write a resume in the Western style, etc. The pathway semester also helped me identify gaps in my ability to write and express my ideas, thoughts and knowledge. I have always struggled to coherently put my thoughts on paper. The pathway courses I took in the semester i.e. EAP 508 and PROV 504, helped me formulate and express my ideas.

Finally, I would like to conclude that the pathway semester at George Mason has not only helped me identify my strengths and improve my academic and professional skills but also overcome some of my weaknesses and thus proceed confidently and competent in the future semesters and in various aspects of professional and social life.