

Transcript

Christina Torres:

Hi everyone and welcome to Futures in Languages, a podcast showcasing stories from UCF's Modern Languages and Literatures Department alumni. I'm Christina Torres and I'll be hosting this episode. Today we'll be talking with Sandra Pauleti, who graduated from the MA TESOL program in Spring of 2018. Sandra, thank you so much for joining us today. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

Sandra Pauleti:

Okay. I was born and raised in Sao Paulo, Brazil. Sao Paulo is the biggest city in Brazil with more than 20 million people, which can be scary during a pandemic like this. But the good part is that people from all over the world, so you can get in touch with many different cultures. I will start by sharing how I ended up at UCF. Very early in life, I developed two passions, technology and foreign language. One of my dreams was to learn English and to become an English teacher. Unfortunately, my dream was out of reach because I lived in a family with low socioeconomic status and I had no access to language education at that time. So when I was 17 years old, I went to a language school close to my house. I shared with them that I had a strong desire to learn English, but I could not afford to pay for the course. So after a qualifying test and an interview with praise fall, I was granted a full scholarship under the condition that all my grades should be over 90. So that was the beginning of my journey as a good student at that time. So the following year when I went to college I had to decide between technology and languages, and I ended up choosing technology because at that time I was already working as a computer programmer. So it looked more obvious. And after college, I worked with technology for many years until the day I became ill. And it changed. Everything was a turning point. God was wonderful, he helped me, he gave me a second chance. So I decided to pursue my old dream of being an English teacher. I start to search for universities in the US that offered the Master in TESOL program. And then I discovered UCF. I researched the program and its professors, and I learned that that was one of the best in the field. So I that I knew that that's where I wanted to be in that time. So in 2016, after being accepted to UCF, I left my career, my home, my friends, and went to the US to start the master in TESOL.

Christina Torres:

Great. That's a very inspiring story, Sandra. Thank you for sharing that with us. So it's been a few years since you graduated. Could you tell us a little bit about what have you been up to since graduation?

Sandra Pauleti:

After graduation, I taught for one year at the English Language Program at UCF, and I also work as an English instructor for a language school in Orlando. And during that time, I received several job offers and from many different places, including one from a school in Brazil, which I accepted and decided to move back. So now I'm currently working for the school, which is an American prep school in Sao Paulo. It's a K to 12 school. And I'm teaching both English and technology to middle and high school. So I feel very blessed because I have my two passions together. Even when I'm teaching technology, I have to teach in English since it's an American school. I also work as a technology coordinator for this school, helping to bring new technologies to the classroom. I am a kind of bridge between the IT department and the education department. And outside the school I've been tutoring some ELL students.

Christina Torres:

That's great. And that's so exciting that you were able to bridge your two loves the technology and the English language all in one. And I think we agree especially, I mean, I love technology. I love teaching with technology. I think it's really cool. And I think I know, especially now in the COVID situation, distance learning and technology is going to be such a big factor in where we go from here, right? So it's so nice that you've been able to capitalize on that background. My next question is, how did the MA TESOL program prepare you for your life now?

Sandra Pauleti:

Let me start saying that going to UCF was one of the best decisions that I made in my life. It was an extraordinary experience. The program was beyond my expectations. The professors are fantastic. They are expert in the field, and it was a privilege to be able to learn from them, they not only taught me, but they encouraged me. They helped me to persevere, and they were by my side. When I start teaching the courses provide me with the theoretical knowledge and the practical application that I needed to teach and to manage a classroom. And another important point to mention is that the school where I'm teaching now is international with students from many different countries and cultures. And I believe that everything that I learned and experienced at UCF has prepared me for this multicultural environment that I'm now, and I now have the opportunity to observe and apply concepts described in the books, in skills in class, also linguistics, ethnography, intercultural competence was for these reasons, I believe that taking the Masters in TESOL was fundamental in preparing me to do what I'm doing now.

Christina Torres:

I'm so excited to hear you talk about the blend of practical and theoretical. It seems like that was a very important part of the program for you and something that you valued a lot.

Sandra Pauleti:

It was definitely.

Christina Torres:

I'm curious, do you have a favorite story from your time in the MA TESOL?

Sandra Pauleti:

There's so many stories, but one story was at the very beginning, one of my first classes was socio-linguistics. And at the very beginning, Dr. Vitanova gave us assignment, it was a long paper. And at that time I didn't know everything. Cause I started the master with my technology background. So when I was in the classroom and we had the discussions, all my classmates were talking about the papers and the scholars, and I had no idea who they're talking about. So when I had to write that paper at that time, I thought, it's impossible. I'll not be able to do that. So I went to talk to Dr. Vitanova and she helped me. She went through the book with me, she explained, and then at the end I was able to write and to present the paper. But it was something very unbelievable at that time and for me to be there, listen to my classmates and had no idea what was going on for me to as complete praise at the beginning, I was very scared. I thought I wouldn't, wouldn't be able to finish the course, but I did. And the professor, they helped me a lot. So for me, this was one remarkable moment at Master.

Christina Torres:

It seems like it was a challenge that you then had a lot of support for in that class, and that support helped you to feel much more comfortable at the end. That's great.

Sandra Pauleti:

Yes.

Christina Torres:

That's good to hear. And I know that I always valued my one-on-one discussions with my professors as well, found that was really helpful. Going forward, I have one more question here for you and that is, what advice would you offer someone who is interested in studying TESOL?

Sandra Pauleti:

I would highly recommend the program. As I said before, it's fantastic. And as a bonus there is a great advantage, you can do it anywhere in the world. Many professions depend on you being in a big city or in a particular place, but not so for English teachers. You can be in Asia, you can be in South America like I am now. You can be in Africa anywhere in a huge city or in a tiny little village. And still there will be always people willing to learn English, to study English. So you have the freedom to live anywhere. You want to have the freedom to move as many students used to do after the course. So I think to conclude, Christina, I think I believe that every great achievement starts with a dream. I'm here today because I had a dream one day, and I would tell this person that if you have a dream, make it happen. Walt Disney once said that if you can dream it, you can do it. So go after your dream.

Christina Torres:

Thank you so much, Sandra. We really appreciate having you in our lineup. We really appreciate you taking the time to talk with us for this series.

Sandra Pauleti:

You are welcome. It was a pleasure.

Christina Torres:

Thank you for listening to this episode of Futures in Languages. I'd like to give a shout out to Da Video Guy for our intro and outro music downloaded from freesound.org. I'm Christina Torres, and our featured guest today was Sandra Pauleti. Tune in next time to hear more alumni stories from Modern Languages. For more information about the MA TESOL and other language programs in the Modern Languages Department, please visit our website at mll.cah.ucf.edu.