

Cultural group marks 10 years of guiding interns

BY CARLOTTA MOHAMED

The Cross Cultural Internship Program celebrated its 10th anniversary earlier this month as 70 exchange students from Asia and the Pacific nations recounted their experiences interning in the offices of Queens lawmakers at the 2018 Recognition Ceremony at Citi Field, home of Major League Baseball's New York Mets.

Over 130 guests attended the July 6 event, including city and foreign government officials, host representatives and university partners. Representatives from various government officials presented certificates, citations, and proclamations recognizing the involved parties' efforts and achievements of the CCIP exchange visitor program in its cultural endeavors.

"Every year we host a recognition ceremony," said founder Elizabeth Kay. "But our 10th anniversary makes it more special this year. It's great to host our interns and

partners, hear from prominent leaders, and then enjoy a ball game at the home of the Mets."

CCIP is a full-placement Exchange Visitor Internship Program run by FUSIA, a U.S. State Department-designated visa sponsor in the J-1 intern category. It has been in operation since 2008 and provides opportunities to more than 1,000 exchange visitors from over 10 top universities in Asia.

This year 70 interns were selected from a pool of 1,100-plus applicants to participate in two seven-week core sessions. During the program, the students live together at the Asiatic Hotel located at 135-21 37th Ave. in Flushing and gain experience at one of the internship hosts, which are primarily located in New York City. The host organizations include the offices of U.S. Rep. Joseph Crowley, U.S. Rep. Grace Meng, state Sen. Tony Avella (D-Bayside), state Sen. Toby Stavisky (D-Flushing), Assembly members Ron Kim



The Cross Cultural Internship Program celebrated its 10th anniversary, bringing together exchange visitors and key supporters of its cultural initiatives at the 2018 Recognition Ceremony at Citi Field.

Courtesy of CCIP

(D-Flushing), Nily Rozic (D-Fresh Meadows) and David Weprin (D-Fresh Meadows). Others include law firms, engineering firms, ad agencies, real estate agencies, and more.

Students and host organizations took the stage to describe the positive experience of collaborating with the program and its participants.

Hor Yau Serena Wong, from The Chinese Univer-

sity of Hong Kong, majoring in law and English (Literary Studies), interned at Meng's office, learning how to assist constituents with their requests and applications in a short time period.

Wong said the rewarding experience benefitted her in many ways and proved she made the right decision signing up for the CCIP program.

"I felt that I have matured emotionally, and am now

much more confident in handling new tasks on my own," said Wong. "Practically, I was given the chance to polish skill sets necessary for my future professional goals as well. I am deeply grateful for the patience and kindness that staff members from my host office had shown me."

Yichun Fang, one of the group leaders, from the University of Hong Kong, majoring in law, politics, and public administration, completed his internship at Weprin's district office.

"Before this internship, I would say I was not a confident person and prefer to write things out rather than speaking up, however, this internship pushed me to change," said Fang. "I began to enjoy interaction with people and gained greater confidence. Being introverted is not a weakness, but I believe that the social skills I learned from this internship are definitely valuable."

Representatives from host organizations and partner uni-

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versities, along with community leaders, were presented handmade, paper cut gifts as tokens of appreciation for helping the exchange visitor internship program further its mission of promoting cultural exchange.

The ceremony commemorated the students' experiences in the program with a video presentation produced by the exchange visitors. The photos featured in the video offered a touching look at student life that also took them on a trip down memory lane.

"I have made good friends I hope to keep all my life, and now appreciate other cultures more than ever before," said Natali Chien Lin Ghui, from the Singapore Institute of

Management, majoring in communications. "I have learned a great deal about my personal qualities, work ethic, and the specific skills that I can harness to achieve more in my future career."

That night's baseball game between the Mets and Tampa Bay Rays followed the close of the ceremony, providing students with a beloved and classic American experience to end the night.

While the ceremony marked the end of the first wave of the 2018 CCIP participation, it also marked the beginning for Session B students, who have seven weeks in the United States to look forward to.

Reach reporter Carlotta Mohamed by e-mail at cmohamed@cnglocal.com or by phone at (718) 260-4526.

Contact the newsroom:

718-260-4545 • timesledgernews@cnglocal.com