



LACCD's Project MATCH Grad Receives Fulbright Scholar Award

Raymond Chimezie, Ph.D. takes his teaching lessons to Nigeria

By Caroline Sun

Growing up in poverty in Eastern Nigeria, Raymond Chimezie's parents sent him to school with the hope that he would care for his eight younger siblings when he completed high school and got a job. His parents wanted him to be a teacher. But, while Chimezie worked to support the family, he continued his education beyond high school.

"Through hard work and determination, I finished my undergraduate studies in Nigeria and migrated to the United States where I continued my education and earned my doctorate," says Chimezie. "Personal struggles and experiences taught me that education is the best hope for the poor and an opportunity that should not be missed whenever available."



Chimezie became a teacher spending the past decade teaching in northern California's West Contra Costa Unified School District. He also founded a non-profit organization, Health for Schools and Communities Foundation, promoting health and wellness projects in schools and communities in the school district and in his native Nigeria.

"My motivation to be a teacher was to help those who struggle with life's circumstances to acquire the knowledge to solve personal problems including managing threatening life conditions" says Chimezie.

Now, thanks to the Los Angeles Community College District's Project MATCH (Mentors Act To Change History) program, which provided him with the training and opportunity to have college teaching experience. Chimezie will take his teaching skills to a new level. He will be teaching potential leaders in public health and guiding them to use their skills and education to impact their communities in a positive way.

Project MATCH is designed to recruit and prepare a diverse community college faculty that will be sensitive to the needs of the diverse student body attending its nine colleges. The six-month program provides the training, mentoring and teaching opportunities for students to learn the skills necessary for success on a college campus.

Chimezie, a recent alum of Project MATCH, received a Fulbright award to teach public health and conduct research at the Federal University of Technology, in Owerri, Nigeria. The Fulbright Scholarship program was designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. Chimezie's project in Nigeria which begins this Fall will last until June 2017.

"Project MATCH exposed me to what it takes to be a college instructor," said Dr. Chimezie. "It gave me the confidence to stand before college students and deliver challenging but interesting instructions. It taught me the importance of rigor in preparing lessons, understanding students' needs and tailoring instructions to meet individual learning styles."

Dr. Chimezie says he's eager to return to Nigeria and put into practice what he learned through Project MATCH. He also highly recommends the program for his peers. "Project MATCH is a one-stop internship program for all aspiring teachers," said Dr. Chimezie. "Participating in the program will reduce teacher burn-out and increase teacher confidence and skills." 🍌

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