Champion Spotlight: Toni Olivas

I was actually awarded the Spectrum Scholarship twice, as I had to decline the first award (2001) due to personal and professional reasons. Still, I persevered and applied again the following year. I was lucky to again be selected and granted the scholarship that opened many doors for me and held on tight for the ride of my professional life! Thanks to the Spectrum award (and the Knowledge River Scholarship program), I attended the School of Information at the University of Arizona and was able to focus on my studies full-time to attain an MA in what felt like record time. The Spectrum Institute was an amazing opportunity where both the 2002 and the 2003 scholars shared a bonding experience in Orlando. Why did this institute have two cohorts? 2002 was the only year that, due to a fear of funding running out from the initial Spectrum Initiative, no Institute was planned. On top of that the entire ALA Annual Conference in Toronto was impacted by a massive SARS outbreak. Needless to say, that Orlando Spectrum Institute was memorable and amazing because it provided me the opportunity to make more Spectrum friends and build life-long connections with other librarians of color.

Toni Olivas is currently the Education & Sociology Librarian at California State University, San Marcos. Toni earned her MA in Library and Information Science from the University of Arizona (2003) and her Doctorate in Educational Leadership from the University of California, San Diego/California State University, San Marcos (2014). Toni’s research on the retention and motivation to lead of underrepresented minority academic librarians. Toni was a 2002 Spectrum Scholar and a proud member of the first cohort of Knowledge River Scholars (2002-2003).

Toni is a Spectrum Champion! She has graciously volunteered to serve as a Cohort Champion working on outreach to the 2002-2003 Class of Spectrum Scholars. If you are a Scholar from this year please consider emailing Toni (mailto:tolivas@csusm.edu) to learn more about how you can help support Spectrum’s 20th Anniversary: A Celebration of Community. Cohort Champions have also committed to organizing a networking event in their region, activism, and fundraising efforts.

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