



“Send the Elevator Back Down” – Catherine Ma Helps International Students Find Their Footing



Professor Catherine Ma

Like many of Kingsborough’s talented faculty, Catherine Ma, Assistant Professor of Psychology, cares deeply about the success and well-being of her students, both in and outside of her classroom. This is often because she can relate to many of them, particularly those who are struggling to earn their degrees as first-generation immigrants. “I came to the United States from Hong Kong at a very young age,” Dr. Ma says. “I did not speak a word of English, and my family came from humble means. Every day at Kingsborough, I see many students going through similar challenges, and I want them to know that I can relate to many of their struggles.”

Outside of the classroom, Dr. Ma acts as a mentor to students who are striving to realize their dreams, while also navigating the shaky terrain of a new country. She said, “I was always lucky to have mentors and to be able to mentor other students is one way I can give back.” These efforts include a prominent role in Kingsborough’s Women’s Center, where she was recently recognized for her dedication and lasting contributions: “I am very thankful for the Women’s Center and Single Stop because every semester, I come across a student who becomes homeless or is going through a difficult patch and both these resources have been quite helpful to these students.”

Last year, Dr. Ma took her commitment to students a giant step further by establishing the *Yuet Chun & Tai Yee Ma Scholarship Fund*. Honoring the legacy of her grandparents, this scholarship will support students who are working hard to create a better life for themselves and their families: “when my grandmother passed, it dawned on me how much she and my grandfather sacrificed to immigrate to the United States, and I wanted

to do something to create a lasting honor to their sacrifices.” She sees so many immigrant students who are working so hard to stay afloat that they often do not seek help because they are unaware of the assistance that is available, or they feel they should do all this alone. This scholarship is her way of saying to these students that you are not alone and you are entitled to the support that is available.

For Dr. Ma, this scholarship is a natural progression for her as an educator and mentor at Kingsborough. It is her way to leave a lasting mark that goes beyond the campus or classroom, and yet serves the same greater purpose: helping students who have already walked several miles in her shoes, and have many more to go. “If life has been good to you, I believe you have an obligation to send the elevator back down to others who need help. We all didn’t make it on our own. We stood on the shoulders of others and what better way to thank them but by allowing others to stand on ours.”

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