

LAUREN GIH

B.A. PSYCHOLOGY '14

Lauren Gih can't get enough Disney magic.

A lifelong fan of the California theme park and annual pass holder since 2010, Gih has visited Disneyland close to 400 times. Her 58 trips in 2015 may be a personal record.

She's also breaking records on an academic front.

Gih continued her education after CI, becoming the youngest graduate of the Master of Science in Psychology program (Applied Psychology) at the University of Southern California. She's currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education program (Educational Leadership) at Concordia University in Irvine and is the youngest student ever admitted into any doctoral program at the university.

Her experience at CI not only influenced her decision to attend graduate school, but also her dissertation topic: "Predictors of Student Retention in Undergraduate Students" with a focus on minorities and first-generation students.

Although Gih got excellent grades at CI, she never thought about furthering her education until CI Professor Kimmy Kee-Rose recognized Gih's potential and strongly encouraged her forward. Kee-Rose has served as a mentor and Gih has returned to CI to help students with undergraduate research projects.

"In terms of my dissertation, I met a variety of first-generation students at CI, and I witnessed struggles – everything from self-doubt and cultural differences to prejudice, extreme financial difficulties and guilt at leaving a family member behind to attend school," says Gih. "Those circumstances motivated me to explore the barriers and develop programs to help these students complete their degrees."

After obtaining her Ed.D., Gih hopes to gain teaching experience at the university level, then become an administrator that promotes diversity and inclusiveness.

"Disneyland helps balance the rigors of academic life and offers an incentive for me to complete assignments," says Gih. "I use it as a reward system. Also, being at Disneyland reminds me to not take everything so seriously."

NOTE: On her birthday this year, Gih and boyfriend/CI alum (`14) Ryan Stokes spent 18 hours at Disneyland!

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ONE UNIVERSITY DRIVE
CAMARILLO, CA 93012

www.csuci.edu/alumni

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