

My First Semester at UC – Lesa Maria Triyanti

I can't help but feel incredibly grateful for the opportunity to study at the University of Cincinnati. From the very beginning, I've been surrounded by inspiring and supportive people - whether it's been Della, my fellow Indonesian Fulbright, or my professors who genuinely want to see us succeed. Looking back, I never really had a clear picture of what academic life in the U.S. would be like. I was constantly worried, filled with self-doubt, and asking myself questions like, "Will I be able to do this?", "Is it even possible?", and "Will people understand my English?" But as it turns out, it wasn't as bad as I had imagined. I've managed to navigate everything just fine, and I've made the most of this first semester.

I am also deeply honored and incredibly grateful to have been awarded the \$8,000 A. Margaret Boyd Scholarship to support my studies at UC. This fellowship has greatly eased my educational journey, and I feel so fortunate to be selected as a recipient. It has also been a wonderful experience to meet and learn from the many inspiring educators and mentors associated with DKG. I truly appreciate their dedication to empowering students and fostering a love for learning. This opportunity not only helps me financially but also motivates me to give back and strive for excellence in my academic and future endeavors.

What really stood out for me when I was at UC was how much I've learned - not just from my courses, but from the entire process of adapting to a new academic environment. I've found joy in the journey, in the challenges, and in the growth that has come with it. So far, my favorite courses have been *Learning Science and Technology* and *Multimedia Studio*.

The *Learning Science and Technology* course has been especially significant for me as an aspiring instructional designer. It's opened my eyes to the importance of understanding how humans learn and how different instructional designs can be used to accommodate these different learning styles. This course has shown me that everyone learns in unique ways and that the best instructional methods are those that are adaptable to these varying needs. It's been eye-opening to realize how crucial it is to approach learning with flexibility and empathy.

Multimedia Studio, on the other hand, has been more hands-on, where I've had the chance to design various types of multimedia to teach concepts, share information, and more. What really caught my attention in this course was the emphasis on accessibility. We don't just create multimedia to look good or to be informative; we must consider how accessible it is for all learners. This is where I was introduced to Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a framework that's incredibly important for an instructional designer to understand. UDL promotes designing learning experiences that are flexible and accessible to all, regardless of their background or ability. Learning about UDL has been one of the highlights of this course because it's a principle I know will guide my work in the future.

Outside of academics, my first semester has been fulfilling in other ways as well. One of the most rewarding experiences has been volunteering with the Book Bus, where I work with Sandy Lingo to read books to children. It's something I genuinely look forward to after a day of working on assignments. The joy on the kids' faces, the excitement they bring to each story, and the simple act of sharing literature with them has been one of my favorite things to do. It's a small but meaningful way for me to give back to the community and make a positive impact.

All in all, I can confidently say that my first semester at UC has been a fun and enriching experience. It's been a blend of hard work, personal growth, and the opportunity to explore new passions. I've learned a great deal, not just academically, but also about myself and what I want to achieve as I move forward in my studies and my career. I'm excited to see where this journey takes me and the many lessons yet to come.