A Dream(er) to teach

University of Dayton
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They are Dreamers, refugees and other men and women who have returned to their native countries or been deported from the U.S. Today, while their futures may seem uncertain, they have a new opportunity: to earn a certificate from the University of Dayton that will allow them to teach English as a foreign language and create a pathway to a new life.

Fifteen people are enrolled in the inaugural Dreamers Program, a partnership based in Mexico between the University; Grupo SM, a publishing company based in Spain; and its foundation, Fundación SM. The program was created to help meet the demand for English teachers in Mexico, where the government now requires children to begin learning the language in preschool, and to provide opportunities for people who face challenges because of changing U.S. immigration laws.

“There is a real strength in these students' binational, bicultural experience, and we know it will be highly valuable to the young people who study under them,” said Brenna Seifried, program coordinator for...
the University of Dayton English Language Institute, which was established in partnership with Grupo SM.

The six-month program, which includes in-person instruction in Mexico City as well as online coursework, will prepare the students to teach children and adults. Each person received a scholarship from Fundación SM.

While some of the students in the program have previous experience in the classroom, most have been employed outside education or hold degrees in other areas.

Jorge Lopez worked in culinary arts in the U.S. before he decided to return to Mexico by himself at the age of 18 because of his legal situation. Lopez, whose parents had taken him to Oregon when he was an infant, said he hit a roadblock in his education when he returned to Mexico.

“Things didn’t quite go as I had expected,” he said. “Culture shock and economic factors kept me from continuing my college career.”

He looked for work in Mexico and inadvertently began a career as an English teacher. He currently works for an online school teaching students from China and Japan. He also instructs employees at automotive companies through his own small business.

“I’m always trying to improve since I never studied this formally, but now it’s my passion and I strive to do my best,” he said. ”I believe knowledge about learning and teaching is always evolving, new things are being discovered and I wanted to be a part of it.”

Raul Becerril spent most of his childhood in California. His parents brought him to the United States when he was 2 years old, but the family returned to Mexico when he was 15 to pursue job opportunities.

Becerril began teaching English after high school and instantly knew he found his calling when one of his students hugged him and said: “I love learning English.” Though he has the language skills to teach, he lacks the instructional credential many schools desire.
“With this certificate, I will be better prepared as an English teacher,” Becerril said, “and more secure of myself knowing I have the knowledge and skills to teach my students how to communicate in English.”

The teaching certificate is a valuable opportunity for people to earn a living wage and better prepare to reunite their families, said Maggie Loredo, co-director of Other Dreamers in Action, a group focused on reintegrating returnees to Mexico, which is collaborating on the program.

“It is important for the bicultural, bilingual community returning to Mexico to be able to pursue their dreams and better opportunities,” she said.

After the first program ends in July, the partner organizations plan to build on its success with future classes for displaced students. More information on the University’s Teaching English as a Foreign Language Certificate is available at udayton.edu/international/connect/udel.

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