**Students as Partners in Scholarship – Cindy Darbandi**

Diane

Okay Cindy, so if you can tell me how have you found working with the eSTEeM Reference Panel over the last 12 months. What have been your highlights or things that stood out for you?

Cindy

Highlights for me working with the eSTEeM Reference Panel is obviously working with other students, and working with academics as well, and realising what happens and what goes on behind the scenes of when you're doing a module, when you're trying to you know do your studies.

So, I think my main highlight was when I went to my first conference last year, instead of doing my TMAs and my online work, I was so engrossed with what I saw I just found the whole thing completely fascinating, and I learned a lot and I think that kind of shaped my journey where I am going right now into the academic side in the OU.

So, it was just a matter of, not deliberately, but there was like opportunities what people have come to me with different things, so they've got to know me through different mediums, like this student consultations and I was on the pilot of the Personal Advisory Service, I was in there, and I will say do the EDIA student consultation projects, so I'm in there a little bit there and I help out with all sorts of different things.

So, my first stop was the eSTEeM Reference Panel and that helped open the doors to all these other things that I'm involved in for the benefit of mainly students.

For me it's important that students, okay it's all well and good you doing all your learning, but it'd be quite interesting for you to know what happens behind the scenes and have an understanding of that, and it will, well it did for me, it changed my learning and the way that I see things, and in this whole year that I've been with you guys, I've also become a student intern, so that's really back of house type of thing, and I found that enlightening, enjoyable, exciting, and the most important part of that is putting my learning into use from what I've learned on the on the Panel, encouraging other people and other students to be involved as well, and also the learning I've done through my degree and I'm actually putting that to good use as well.

So, it's an amazing learning curve and I would encourage any student to come along and be involved. Start small, you know not many people have time, I don't, but start small and have a look around you'll be surprised, and be open to things, be open to what you find, you might you might surprise yourself.