

1. I became aware of how people can be neglected because they lack resources after working with migrant and refugee families. Better resources are needed to guide. These families are not asking for too much, it's safe to say. Even though I didn't get to meet them directly, donating and helping from behind the scenes made me think deeply about how much people are struggling without a say. This experience taught me that educational equity means nothing if it doesn't include the people who are usually left out, and it made me want to be the kind of person who helps those around me more. Especially since not many people would consider this problem.
2. Mutual help, in contrast to conventional charity methods, is based on reciprocity and solidarity; it is about communities looking out for one another rather than waiting for institutions to step in. I was able to observe this directly when a family who had just received donated clothing returned the next week with additional goods to give away. It served as a sobering reminder that individuals are active contributors to the development of care networks rather than passive beneficiaries of assistance. On an emotional level, the work's urgency was both inspiring and debilitating; at times, it seemed that no matter how much we contributed, the demand would only increase. But instead of deterring me, that pressure strengthened my resolve to support agile, community-led, and trust-based grassroots initiatives. I learned from this experience that effective organizing begins with listening to people's actual needs, showing up, and acting on them in real time. Mutual aid is also about dignity as much as it is about survival.
3. The study examining how the general population views the worth of a college degree, particularly in first-generation immigrant households, struck a chord with me the most. As someone with an immigrant background, I noticed similarities to the experiences of my own family in the survey responses: parents who viewed higher education as a means of achieving stability yet frequently found it difficult to comprehend or handle the process. I became more aware of how statistics may provide a voice to collective experiences that are frequently disregarded in policy discussions after taking part in this project. The process of compiling and arranging the responses also caused me to reflect critically on the duty we bear when obtaining data from underrepresented groups—how we pose the questions, how we handle the responses, and how we safeguard the individuals who are represented in the statistics. This experience taught me that gathering data in an ethical, community-centered manner can help dispel false narratives and guide the development of more fair policies, particularly when it brings to light viewpoints that are too frequently ignored or obscured in decision-making settings. It confirmed my conviction that data is not neutral; rather, it is a tool that, with the right application, can promote justice.
4. This experience not only strengthened my belief that community organizations can effectively tackle complex, interrelated problems, but it also forced me to consider the extent and long-term viability of that influence. Working with ChiEAC allowed me to observe firsthand how grassroots initiatives might have a real impact on issues like

digital access, school enrollment, and job preparedness. ChiEAC was actively working to reduce these obstacles through seminars, translation assistance, and direct support. For instance, in our study on career preparedness and hurdles to job searching, several families mentioned annoyance with online application procedures and restricted access to the internet. Community organizations frequently cover the gaps left by official institutions because of their exceptional ability to react swiftly and sympathetically. But I also became increasingly conscious of the drawbacks, such as staff and volunteer burnout, a lack of sustained funding, and the fact that such efforts, but effective, are unable to make up for structural underinvestment in underserved regions. I learned from this experience that although community organizations are essential change agents, in order to provide long-lasting solutions, their efforts must be supported by more extensive structural reforms in economic opportunity, education, and policy.

5. My personal objectives and feeling of purpose have been greatly influenced by my stay with ChiEAC. I was generally interested in social justice and education prior to this position, but I now feel a strong desire to work in a field that emphasizes ethical public service, policy reform, and community activism. I learned from this experience that genuine change frequently begins locally by listening, showing up, and establishing trust. I will keep that in mind for whichever direction I decide to go in the future. In addition to gaining useful skills in data analysis, outreach, and bilingual communication, I also became more conscious of the systemic pressures that influence people's lives and the ability of group care to counteract them. By remaining active in grassroots efforts, promoting inclusive educational policies, and raising my voice to give voice to people who are frequently ignored, I wish to keep helping others. I gained direction from ChiEAC in addition to experience. It made it clearer to me that my participation in the justice movement is based on action, equity, and empathy, and that it is a lifelong endeavor.