Michelle Villanueva, PA-C  
CO 2017 Alumna

Where are you from and when did you graduate from the FIU Master in Physician Assistant Studies (MPAS) program?
I was born and raised in Miami, Florida and, graduated in the inaugural class in 2017.

Who or what inspired you to pursue a career as a Physician Assistant?
My parents were my biggest inspirations and supporters. They showed me the meaning of sacrifice, always taught me that nothing worth having comes easy, and always pushed me to do my best in all that I do in order to accomplish my goals.

What did you enjoy most about the FIU MPAS Program?
The best part of the program is how you become a family, not only with the rest of your classmates but also with the staff. One of the first things that caught my attention when I started the FIU MPAS program was how welcoming the staff made you feel. They were also very receptive to our concerns and suggestions.

What did you learn in the FIU MPAS Program that has been helpful in your career as a PA?
The medical knowledge and the hands-on experience gained through school workshops and clinical rotations.

What has been your greatest accomplishment since graduating?
Having the ability to make an impact in my patient’s lives is definitely my greatest accomplishment and something I never take for granted. In addition, immediately after graduating I completed a Pediatric Emergency Medicine Fellowship which was another great accomplishment and an opportunity I was blessed to have.

How has COVID-19 impacted your profession?
Many people, including medical professionals lost their jobs because of the pandemic. I was one of them. Due to a decline in patient volume, the hospital where I worked had to furlough workers. I was extremely blessed to land a new and even better job opportunity in a surgical oncology, and I am very happy. This is the beauty of being a PA, and the flexibility PA have to work in different specialties.

What advice would you give a PA student?
Keep your head up and never give up! Didactic year can be very overwhelming and stressful, but always remember what my parents told me: "nothing worth having comes easy." Don’t be afraid to lean on your classmates and staff for help! Trust the process & focus on the end goal. Before you know it, you will be a PA-C!