



Valeria Gonzalez

High school: Moline High School

Hometown: Moline, Ill.

Major: Secondary mathematics education

Internships: Student taught at Bettendorf Iowa Middle School

Post-grad plans: Teach math at Rock Island High School

“Val’s sense of wonder and excitement when learning make her a joy to teach and will make learning a joy for those she teaches. Her success is due to her persistence and willingness to work hard and ask questions until she gets it. I will miss her enthusiasm and positive attitude in our department, but knowing she will be bringing that to a new math department makes me smile!”

— Dr. Stacey Rodman, professor and chair, mathematics and computer science

MORE THAN I IMAGINED 2020

SENIORS REFLECT ON ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND LOOK AHEAD

Why Augustana?

I had my daughter my senior year of high school. Even though I was a teen mom, I knew I still wanted to pursue a college education. Because Augustana is about a 3-minute drive from my home, it seemed like the right fit. Augustana made it possible for me to balance being a mom and a student.

Are you where you thought you’d be when you first came to campus?

No way. When I first came to Augustana, I came in with the intention of majoring in accounting to become an actuary. Freshman year winter term was when I realized that I wanted to pursue becoming a math teacher. I have definitely grown over the years, evolving into a (hopefully) great math teacher, but also a student who appreciates the great benefits of being a part of Augustana’s education program.

Who helped you get to where you are now?

There are so many people who have helped me get to where I am now: Professor Mike Egan, Professor Jon Clauss, Professor Michael Scarlett, Professor Deb Bracke, Professor Mike Schroeder, Professor Stacey Rodman, Professor Katie Hanson, Professor Randy Hengst, Susan Kramer and Julie Olinger. These people have truly seen me at my lowest points, and have also been there for the highest points in my education/math career. All of the professors mentioned have pushed me farther than I could have imagined; they saw something in me that at times I did not see in myself. I am very grateful to have been taught by these professors, and most importantly, I am extremely grateful they pushed me to be the greatest teacher and math student that I could be.

Peak experience?

My peak experience was student teaching at Bettendorf Middle School. This experience is everything that the education program tries its best to prepare you for. Those 14 weeks made such an amazing impact on me. There were some great memories with my students and faculty, and in planning lessons that engaged my kids. Sure there were some downs, but teaching is all about learning from those downs. This experience truly made me say to myself “I’m ready to do this.”

What surprised you?

I was surprised by how many great relationships I created with the staff. The education program is truly like a family, and I did not expect that going into ED300.

How did you use Augie Choice?

I used my Augie Choice to travel to Jamaica with Professor Mike Egan and Professor Michael Scarlett. It was such a great experience! We were able to travel around and see the different parts of the island—the fancy hotel spots, but also the heart of Kingston where we visited.

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High school: Moline High School

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Minors: Biology and women's and gender studies

Internships: Student taught at Bettendorf Iowa
Middle School

Post-grad plans: Teach math at Rock Island
High School

What will you miss the most?

What I will miss the most will be seeing not only the professors who helped me get to where I am now, but also the amazing friends that I have gained along the way. Throughout these four years, I have made such amazing friends who have helped me through rigorous courses.

Advice for the Class of 2024?

Find a professor or faculty member you can confide in. It doesn't have to be someone from inside your major, but find someone who is open to discuss your issues and try to find solutions. Freshman year may be hectic, but you will create relationships that may last all four years.