

one-two COMBO

Baylor Grad
Uses Teaching,
Research
Background to
Effect Change

BY / BECCA BROADDUS



EMILY GUTIERREZ,
BBA '11
MS '14, ECONOMICS

In high school, Emily Gutierrez swore she'd never be a teacher. She never imagined herself in boxing gloves four times a week either. But within a few years of graduating with a triple major in Economics, Spanish and Public Administration, she did both.



ON HER WAY BACK FROM A TRIP TO THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC with the Business Excellence Scholarship Team (BEST) her senior year, a fellow student complained of being inundated with emails from Teach for America (TFA), a national organization that recruits leaders with a record of achievement by asking them to teach for two years in a low-income community. Gutierrez suggested the peer forward them to her.

“God’s got a funny sense of humor... I applied not fully knowing what I was getting myself into,” Gutierrez said. “Joining Teach for America opened my eyes to what occurs in public schools on a daily basis. I began to ask how an education system could be considered successful when so little was expected of the students.”

By her second year teaching in the northern Fort Worth school district, she was appointed department head and witnessed the administrative side of education, in addition to the classroom.

“Decisions were being made using data, but without considering all factors, including those outside of the classroom,” she said. “I knew my students, and comparing them to students in another classroom, much less in a school across town wasn’t going to be the solution. The data isn’t always perfect, but how can we best influence this process?”

That question continues to fuel her career.

After two years teaching high school math with TFA, she returned to Baylor to learn more about the economics of education and how she could make a difference. While working on her master’s degree, she accepted a job at the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas and drove to Waco once a week for class and thesis work until graduating in December 2014.

In the meantime, she met her husband while teaching: a high school counselor, U.S. veteran and boxing enthusiast. Soon, the newlyweds were part owners of local boxing gym Faith, Hope & Gloves Boxing, Inc. She was at the gym four nights a week until she started commuting to uptown Dallas from Fort Worth every day.

“I don’t function unless I’m overwhelmed,” she said.

She left her position as a research analyst in July 2016 and began her PhD work at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in the fall to focus on social policy. She’s already looked up nearby boxing gyms to join.

“Ultimately, I want to bridge the gap between policymakers and the classroom,” she said. “There’s a lot both could learn from one another. While my experiences gave me insight into the issues, using data to provide hard evidence as support would allow me to have a greater influence on policy.”

After receiving her PhD, Gutierrez hopes to work in a think tank, like Mathematica, that conducts education research as a collective.

“I want to make a positive impact using my personal experiences from teaching and my research skill set that I will have and will continue to develop during my time at Syracuse,” she said. 

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