

A PASSION FOR EDUCATION

By Jennifer Dennis • September 18th 2020



ROBERTO GERMÁN CUEVA

Growing up in a small village in the Amazon region of Ecuador, Roberto Germán Cueva remembers some of the obstacles in pursuing his secondary school education such as helping his mother in their family owned restaurant before setting off on an extensive daily commute to arrive at school in another city. Through these childhood experiences Roberto deeply empathizes with the struggles that people face with attaining an education.

When an economic crisis hit his country in the year 2000, following the currency change to the U.S. dollar, this caused part of Roberto's family to immigrate to Spain. It was then that Roberto really understood the necessity of a good education.

Since moving to the United States in 2018, Roberto has become passionate about pursuing a career as a teacher and helping others that have endured similar challenges as him.

In his own words, Roberto shares his story:

I come from a humble family who values perseverance and sacrifice. I left my home in the small village of Namirez in the Amazon region of Ecuador when I was fourteen. My mother had decided to move us to a big city in order to give us better opportunities for education. It was an immense sacrifice for her and the family. We left a place where we had stability and friends, and moved to Santo Domingo, a rough and sometimes dangerous city, where all of us needed to work in order to support the family. I attended my classes at night and worked during the day. Sometimes my father organized a soccer team with my brothers and me to compete in matches in order to win money for our dinner. Now, as an adult professional, who has had opportunities to travel, I embrace

the experiences I have had getting to know people from different backgrounds. In Ecuador I was the manager for an Internet company, but recently, I have been finishing up a position with Americorps at the Literacy Center in Flagstaff as a GED math and ESL tutor. As the first person in my family to receive a college degree, and someone who understands some of the obstacles of accomplishing that, one of my greatest passions is supporting others as they work toward their goals. This is ultimately what has led me to teaching and what I consider my teaching philosophy, that and excellence. I try to do everything to the best of my ability.

Roberto began taking Adult Education English Language Acquisition for Adults (ELAA) classes at Coconino Community College in the summer of 2019. He describes his classroom environment as “rich,” filled with a “diverse group of students” of all ages and nationalities that are “all in the same boat,” in that they are not only eager to improve their English to attain better employment and participate in college programs, but they also enjoy the community that these classes provide. He likens this community to one that replaces the community left behind in students’ home countries.

While continuing his English classes, Roberto has recently started teaching Math to high school students at The Orme School, a private boarding and day college preparatory school in Mayer, Arizona. He now says his major challenge is improving his communication with his domestic English-speaking students.

I am most concerned about my English. I am learning and growing a lot in my ability to communicate effectively, especially speaking, in English, but I still have a long way to go! Sometimes I need people to repeat information for me or a moment to think about how to say what I want. It is a big challenge, but I also really enjoy facing and overcoming challenges in life!