

Student-Athlete selected by Teach for America program

The [Liberal Studies](#) major, now teaching and coaching in Boston, was co-captain of the Penguins' soccer team when he learned in November of 2013 that he had been accepted into the Teach For America (TFA) program, a non-profit organization whose mission is to eliminate educational inequity by enlisting high-achieving recent college graduates and professionals to teach for at least two years in low-income communities throughout the United States. Beginning in fall of 2014, Mendez taught bilingual studies in Newark, New Jersey where, according to TFA data, only 22 percent of ninth graders graduate high school in four years. |

“This is the first step I need to take to really understand educational inequity,” Mendez said before graduating from Dominican in May of 2014. “Learn how to teach kids who don't have the resources some kids have. It's going to be an invaluable tool that I will have in the future when I teach and when I communicate.”

Mendez, who in 2013 was named to the Pacific West Conference All-Academic Team, pursued his teaching credential in New Jersey while trying to have a positive impact on students. He did so knowing how fortunate he was to be a part of the Teach For America program. In 2014, TFA received 60,000 applicants. Only 9.5 percent were accepted.

“I've never been happier,” Mendez said. “I've always wanted to work with children. It's all happened and it's all worked out and I'm so passionate about teaching right now. It's crazy.”

Helping people is a tradition in the Mendez family. David's older sister, Eleanna, who was an NAIA All-American soccer player with the Penguins, graduated from Dominican's nursing program and his younger sister, Julianna, a standout on Dominican's cross country team, majored in Special Education.

“David found his passion working with kids and helping mold young lives into successful members of society,” said Phil Billeci-Gard, former Penguins' head [men's soccer](#) coach who graduated from Dominican with a BA in English. “In my opinion, aside from a child's own parents, the greatest influence a child has in his/her life is a teacher. I told David he has a true gift with his natural ability to lead and not to let that go to waste. People will naturally follow him.”

The long range goal for Mendez is to someday create a charter school with an innovative approach with a health/science twist. His idea is to challenge and prepare kids for college while at same time training them for vocational tracts to be sustainable in life.

“The transformation David has undergone from freshman to senior is second to none,” Billeci-Gard said. “He has taken full advantage of his opportunity at Dominican and is leaving with a distinct career path and prepared to face any challenge.”

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