

NMSU Alumni Association Outstanding Graduate | College of Engineering

Emilia Isabel Mandujano Aguilar

Emilia Mandujano Aguilar was born in El Paso, TX, and grew up in Ciudad Juárez. Raised in a family of engineers and educators, Emilia and her sister attended school in both cities, switching every three years so that they would be fluent in both English and Spanish and comfortable in both cultures.

Emilia says attending Loretto Academy instilled in her four core values—faith, community, justice, and respect—that helped her become a self-empowered NMSU student. A bit of a “rebel” in high school, Emilia says that NMSU helped her define who she wants to be. “School is a privilege, and I decided I was going to make the best of it.” Her parents and sister paved the road for her success, and she is grateful that they held her hand, offered guidance, sacrificed for her success—and witnessed the positive changes that NMSU brought about in her. “I couldn’t have done it without them.”

Graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Engineering Technology, Emilia was originally a civil engineering major. One of her professors realized Emilia’s desire for more practical experience through field work and steered her toward engineering technology. This was a much better fit: “I had more exposure to real-world construction methods, and that’s what I want to do—construction!”

She had the chance to put her academics to the test as part of Aggies Without Limits (AWL), an organization of more than 80 members who assist with sustainable engineering projects in developing nations and closer to home. As a member, Emilia was part of the team that assembled an elementary school roof and built a potable water distribution system that brought water to people’s houses in Nicaragua (a project that made her heart “beat a little faster”) and constructed a bridge in Alamogordo, NM.

Although she served as president and vice president of finance for AWL, her favorite role was project manager (while she was vice president of finance) for a team of 20 that designed and constructed a 100-foot pedestrian bridge and an 85-foot drainage system in Honduras, reducing the time for children walking to school from two hours to 30 minutes. “It was the hardest position and made me the happiest, especially watching the first kids walking over the bridge.”

Emilia also served on the Engineering Student Council as director of finance, distributing more than \$150,000 for improvements to lab equipment and software and fundraising \$15,000 to help 24 engineering clubs. She also served as a College of Engineering Student Ambassador for three years.

In her spare time, Emilia dances! For more than 15 years she has practiced lyrical, aerial, jazz, and hip-hop, as well as acrojazz, and took classes and performed in the NMSU Dance Program.

Emilia wants to eventually obtain a master's degree in construction engineering and become a project manager at a construction company. In the meantime, she plans to work as a field engineer after graduation as she begins to work her way up the ladder.