

A MATCH MADE IN PUBLIC SERVICE

Community-minded Westminster alums bond professionally and personally

By Vanessa Eveleth ('23)

One of the best things about being a Westminster College graduate is making lifelong connections with fellow alumni. That's especially true for **Silvia Castro ('98)** and **Edward Bennett ('99)**, whose shared professional connection would grow to become deeply personal.

Their story begins in the Gore School of Business, where Silvia earned a BA in international business and Edward completed a BS in economics. As students, they served in ASWC leadership. They were also present when then-President Peggy Stock led a charge to reform Westminster's business curriculum. These experiences profoundly affected their understanding of leadership and giving others a voice.

"The students were involved in those conversations," Edward says. "People came in and said, 'this is what matters to us.' That's how Westminster works—a community-based organization that allows for everyone to have that input."

Silvia was always involved in community service. Throughout school, she volunteered at the University of Utah's

Upward Bound program, which helps high school students from low-income households fulfill their potential as first-generation college students.

"I would go spend time with the students, encourage them, and try to figure out a way for them to enter college," Silvia says.

After she graduated, Silvia and Edward dated for a time. They remained friends, seeing each other at community and political events. Silvia's career eventually led her to the Suazo Business Center in Salt Lake City, where she serves as executive director. The Suazo Center provides advising and education for business owners and entrepreneurs in underserved communities, giving Silvia the opportunity to use her Westminster education for the benefit of others.

"To actually focus on lifting that person up, lifting that family up, it's just incredibly rewarding," Silvia says. "I love the fact that I get to use business concepts for encouraging somebody and giving them a path for them to help themselves."

After a while, Silvia saw a need on her team at Suazo and realized she knew

someone who would be a perfect fit: Eddie Bennett.

“She contacted me in 2018 and said, ‘Hey, I know you know these things. Will you come help me?’” Edward says. “That was super profound for me because I was in a bad situation that I was trying to get out of. Silvia reaching out to me and saying, ‘I know you and you are strong enough and powerful enough to do these things’ is all it took.”

Fittingly, Edward’s new role at Suazo as director of Business Development was a culmination of his past experiences. While at Westminster, Edward interned at the Utah State Legislature and worked for then-Senator Pete Suazo, the center’s namesake. After graduation, Edward became an educator at high schools and treatment centers.

“I was taking all of these years of experience working with people to help, teach, and broaden their horizons to then expand people’s economic mobility and help them become more self-reliant,” Edward says, noting that the lifelong

learning and critical thinking skills he drew upon were keystones of his Westminster education.

Silvia agrees, adding, “What I learned at Westminster helped shaped me to be able to transition into what I needed to be here at Suazo Business Center.”

It was clear right away Edward was a good fit for Suazo. It was also clear after just a couple months that Silvia and Edward’s professional life was bringing them together as more than colleagues. With the blessing of Suazo’s founder and board, Silvia and Edward began dating. In February 2019, they married.

“I had no idea we’d end up married when Silvia offered me a job,” Edward says. “But knowing we both feel very strongly about serving the public, working to facilitate real change for those who need a voice, and providing a meaningful avenue for our community to be positively impacted has made all the difference. We may have different backgrounds, but our futures are very much on the same course.”

