



UFM

UNIVERSIDAD FRANCISCO MARROQUÍN

ita

Impulso al Talento Académico

P R O F I L E

Edwin's Story

When Did You Discover Your Vocation?



Edwin grew up in a small fishing village near the Caribbean coast of Guatemala, where he had to wake up early to lay nets in a nearby lake with his brothers. When he was eight years old, and his younger brother only four, their father was killed. The family went to live with their grandparents and Edwin and his brother took on the responsibility of fishing for the family's food before and after school.

"There was a 'before' and 'after' in my childhood. Everything changed when my father died and economic conditions obviously became more difficult."

Before he died, Edwin's father shared his love for books with his children. Later, Edwin's elementary school teacher continued to nurture his desire to read. Edwin's town was too remote for daily newspaper delivery, so his teacher saved his newspapers and took them over to him every week.

"At the age of ten, I read about political issues, including presidential elections in other countries. I think that's where my interest in politics began."

Since Edwin's mother couldn't read or write, his teacher helped him fill out the application for a scholarship to a semi-private middle school. The school was about forty-five minutes by boat from Edwin's house, but the family could not afford to pay someone to ferry him across the lake, so Edwin lived with the director of the scholarship program. Edwin's scholarship donors, who were members of an Episcopalian church in Florida, continued to support him through high school. They paid for his tuition to a private high school in a larger town several hours away. Edwin moved into a boarding house near his school and worked part-time at an auto parts shop to help pay for his younger brother's education.

Applying for the ITA Scholarship

Edwin graduated high school with honors. Among his awards and prizes were information packets on university scholarships, including the ITA program. Edwin only had two weeks to

prepare for the admissions exam when he realized the material in the math study guide was far more advanced than what he had learned in high school.

“I didn’t think there was a chance that I would pass the exam. But I thought, I have nothing to lose and everything to gain.”

He was surprised when three weeks after the exam he was invited back to interview for one of five ITA scholarships.

Studying at UFM

Edwin’s transition to the university was eye opening.

“I was used to being the best student in school. At UFM, I was surrounded by smart people who were high achievers.”

Math remained a struggle during his freshman year; even the review topics from the first few classes were totally foreign. He leaned on his fellow ITA students for support. They shared his frustration with the demanding coursework and understood the challenges involved in trading a poor rural village for a private university campus.

“All of the ITA students understood that we couldn’t afford to waste the opportunity to study at UFM, because we wouldn’t ever get another one like it.”

In 2004, Edwin travelled out of the country for the first time in his life. He spent a semester abroad in Chile, living with a family and continuing his economics coursework. In 2007, Edwin graduated magna cum laude from UFM’s School of Economic Sciences.



Postgraduation Career

In 2007, Edwin won one of ten scholarships available to master's students from Latin America at Universidad Francisco de Vitoria in Madrid. His graduate studies in political action solidified his desire to work in politics and he returned home with the intention of running for mayor of his hometown.

“I want to have a direct impact on my community, to improve roads and schools and health services.”

Though Edwin lost the mayoral election, he did not surrender his dream of getting into local politics. Next, he took on a new challenge at the United Nations and broadened his knowledge of the international relations that affect Guatemala in an increasingly interconnected world. Today, Edwin is developing a tourism business to promote his local community.

Edwin's well-known success has made him the go-to counselor for family, friends, and neighbors who want to continue their education. He believes his experience has contributed to a growing interest in higher education in his hometown. Convinced that education can change lives, one of Edwin's goals is to someday open a middle school there.

“I think the best example you can set for others is to find your vocation and then pursue it. Helping others find their vocation and realize their dreams though education is what inspires me.”
