

VANESSA (LAND) PUJIC

Graduated in May 2006 with a BA in Spanish, a BS in mathematics education, and secondary education certification

WHY DID YOU CHOOSE ANDREWS FOR YOUR EDUCATION?

My mother graduated from AU in '76 and always had positive things to say about her time there. I wanted to go to an Adventist school that was far enough away from my hometown that I would meet new people and, in a way, blaze my own trail. I had also planned throughout high school to attend an Adventist university as opposed to a college because I felt it would expand my educational, spiritual and social opportunities.

WHAT WERE YOUR FAVORITE THINGS ABOUT ATTENDING ANDREWS?

Up until college, I had never lived in a dorm, and I happened to be the only girl in my class for three of my four years of high school, so the opportunities I had to build relationships with other women while living in the dorm were, and still are, very important to me. I absolutely LOVED the honors classes that I took through the new J. N. Andrews Honors program that I began my freshman year. The professors and students in those classes, particularly Western Heritage with Drs. Markovic, Mattingly, and Russell and Language of the Fine Arts with Dr. Pittman were amazing, and I still read through the books and reflect upon discussions we had.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO SINCE YOU LEFT?

I don't feel quite like I've left AU yet because my husband, Goran, is still finishing up his master's in architecture there. However, after graduating, I found a job at a local public school, River Valley Middle/High School, and am currently teaching Spanish 1 and 2, geometry, and 7th grade math. I also married my high school sweetheart this past summer on July 22, 2007!

HOW DID ANDREWS PREPARE YOU FOR YOUR CURRENT JOB?

The School of Education teachers did a wonderful job of preparing me for teaching! I especially enjoyed their practical advice on classroom management and the importance of building positive relationships with students. In addition, the jobs that I held working in the Math Center and as a TA for the Math Department helped me feel ready to work in my own classroom.

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER?

Well, it's never boring! As a Spanish teacher especially, it is exciting to see students' perceptions about the world change as they learn about other cultures. I have one student in particular, a sophomore who is in my Spanish II class that hated Spanish last year, refused to be in Spanish Club and participated minimally in class who, this year, has turned into one of Spanish Club's most active participants. His ideas about learning another language and being socially active have completely turned around, and that is something I am honored to have had a part in.

WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

Goran and I both love to travel and dream of living in England, Spain or Croatia at some point, but eventually we would like to make it back home to Minneapolis where our parents live. And though I love my job in a public school now, I would really enjoy working in the Christian education system sometime in the near future...in a big city.

