

### **Keicha Barreto ('09) started her own company**

*Keicha (Muriel) Barreto was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico and grew up nearby. Her family operated an auto body shop. The family came to Camden, NJ in 2003 when she was a junior in high school. Her parents needed health care.*

*Keicha graduated from Rowan CEE in 2009. She had interned with Pepco Holdings in 2007 and 2008 while in school and started full time there in June 2009. PEPCO is a utility company that supplies electric power. She started as an Engineer in the Transmission Engineering Department, designing power lines. Kecha worked at PEPCO for 10 years, becoming a licensed Professional Engineer<sup>1</sup> during that time.*



*Keicha joined a startup consulting firm in 2019, ExecuPower. She worked in Engineering Project Management in the energy sector. A colleague started the company and Keicha was a very early hire. She helped get the firm up and running. When she left in 2021 she was Manager of the Project Management department, with 12 people working for her. ExecuPower had grown to ~100 employees.*

*Keicha recently started her own company. She is the Managing Member of Integrid Project Solutions. Her first client was ExecuPower. Integrid specializes in project management in the energy sector, focusing on solar, wind power, energy storage and strategic consulting for utilities. Keicha started her own company both to gain control over her work-life balance and because it was a personal dream to run a consulting firm that efficiently gets things done for the client. Integrid Project Solutions currently has four employees. The short-term goal is to grow to ten employees. The medium-term goal is 50 to 100.*

*Outside of work, Keicha is busy raising three children and volunteering her engineering skills for her church. The church's building burned in 2009. For the last year-and-a-half, Keicha has provided project management support (plans, permits, construction) & fund raising assistance as the church community prepares to rebuild.*

I had been in the US for only one year, living in Camden. Our family had limited resources. English is my second language. I took an English as a Second Language course at Rowan over the summer. I learned about the EOF<sup>2</sup> fund and applied. I was able to start at Rowan in 2005 with my major undeclared. I was the first person in my family to go to college. I transferred to Civil and Environmental Engineering in 2006.

I always wanted to be an engineer. I liked Science, Math and Art. In Puerto Rico, I went to the Central School of Visual Arts for middle school and high school. I wanted to use my creative skills and thought engineering was the best way to do that.

I enjoyed the Engineers Without Borders<sup>3</sup> student club at Rowan and getting to work on EWB projects in Junior/Senior Engineering Clinic.<sup>4</sup> I got to travel to El Salvador twice, helping to organize each trip. It helped me appreciate my bilingual abilities. I remember we all bought machetes one trip, with nice leather holsters with fringe. We packed them in a single piece of checked luggage. At the Philadelphia airport Professor Everett got out 5 or 6 of the fancy machetes and passed them out to the students. I wonder what the other people at the baggage carousel thought.

In First-Year Clinic, I remember Professor Riddell emphasizing critical thinking. I didn't quite grasp it at the time, but it all made sense by the end of college. When presented with a problem, think it through, identify possible solutions, identify the best solution, and ask questions the whole time.

I treasure my memories of Rowan. All the faculty at Rowan knew us by name. I could stop by their offices with questions, any time. I learned how to build relationships. I learned about myself and how to develop as a person. Rowan has a special place in my heart.

*Based on an Interview with Jess W. Everett on 2024-2-16*

1. The Professional Engineer license (PE) is a “standard recognized by employers and their clients, by governments and by the public as an assurance of dedication, skill and quality...Only PEs can sign and seal engineering drawings...To become a Licensed Professional Engineer, you must do four things: graduate from an accredited engineering program, pass the Fundamentals of Engineering (FE) exam, work with a professional engineer for four years, and pass the Principles and Practice of Engineering exam.”
2. “The Educational Opportunity Fund Program is a State funded grant for New Jersey residents- providing financial assistance and academic support services for low income, first generation, academically promising New Jersey residents with limited academic preparation. Eligible students receive intentional academic support and financial assistance based on their individual need.”
3. Engineers Without Borders-USA is a non-profit organization that helps communities around the world implement sustainable engineering projects, e.g., drill drinking water wells, treat drinking water, build schools or health clinics. Prof. Mehta founded an early student chapter at Rowan in 2004.
4. Engineering Clinic is a hallmark of Rowan University. Students take a Clinic class each semester, eight total. Many are interdisciplinary. All are hands-on. First-year Clinics focus on engineering's place in society and fundamental engineering skills. Sophomore Clinics merge communication coursework with engineering design experience and are team taught by engineering, writing arts, and rhetoric faculty. Junior and Senior Clinics have students work in teams on research or design projects, usually externally funded.