

Friends' bond has monstrous merits in nursing school

What do you call four bright, young women whose ambitions are fierce and their friendship unflinching? "The Dragons." That's because Angelique Alonzo, Luz Jimenez, April Rodriguez and Rebeca Zuniga, friends since the 7th grade, went on to attend Southwest High School together where their school mascot was The Dragons. After high school, the four determined young women stuck together and entered the School of Nursing at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio at the same time.

Rebeca recalls receiving her admittance letter in the mail. "I screamed with excitement!" she said. "I had worked so hard to get in and knew how important it was. I'm the first in my family to go to college."

April also reflected on learning of her acceptance to nursing school. "My mom was so proud of me because I am also the first in my family to attend college," she said.

Angelique added thoughts on her journey to nursing school. "I was born in the projects on the West Side of San Antonio," she said. "My family got assistance from



Friends since the 7th grade and graduates of Southwest High School, "The Dragons" entered nursing school together. Pictured (left to right) are Luz Jimenez, Rebeca Zuniga, April Rodriguez and Angelique Alonzo.

food stamps and government programs and I'm the first in my family to go to college too."

While enrolled in the traditional B.S.N. program, the four motivated young women served as a support system for one another. They formed a study group and enrolled in clinical classes together when possible. Each said they believed their instructors were excellent mentors who were inspirational, motivating and provided them with the tools "to be the best nurse I can be."

Martha Martinez, M.S.N., RN, clinical assistant professor in the Department of Family & Community Health Systems in the School of Nursing, and one of their instructors, was inspired by the young women's determination.

"In my 15 years of teaching student nurses, I have never encountered a group of friends who have remained dedicated to each other's success both personally and professionally," Martinez said. "They have been together since their early middle school years and now have successfully completed their professional nursing education. What is even more impressive is that all four of these young women have overcome many obstacles on their journey to attending college, and what is evident to me is their unconditional support for each other and its importance as a key element to their success," she said.



Pictured (left to right), Luz, Rebeca, Angelique and April, celebrate their accomplishments.

The women also were all members of the International Nursing Students Association (INSA). "Volunteering with INSA has made me realize that educating the public about health awareness is something that I am passionate about," Luz said.

"Making a difference in someone's life is what I aim to do with my work."

As they embark on their nursing careers, the four close friends will most likely pursue different specialties. April would like to work as a medical-surgical nurse at the VA, but has her sights set on pursuing a Ph.D. someday. Rebeca is most interested in cardiac nursing, but also sees herself teaching nursing in the future. Luz will begin working as a medical-surgical nurse, but plans to offer her time to community service in developing countries and Angelique's heart is in obstetrics nursing. She hopes to become a nurse midwife and teach community health.

No matter what path these Dragons decide to pursue, they are sure to fly as they find success in the same way they did at the UT Health Science Center School of Nursing. They claim they will "forever be nursing sisters and definitely friends for life." In the same way they supported each other throughout their school days, the women pledge to continue to push each other to achieve their goals just as fiercely as Dragons do.