



# My Journey from the ‘e’: Alumni Change Lives through Teach for America

October 7 2016 2:39 PM



Two Southern Illinois University Edwardsville alumni have set out to change the world, one classroom at a time. Crystal Frizzell Heimback and Samantha Kinnear, both Collinsville natives, are inspired, passionate individuals. Through their positions as Teach for America corps members, they are on the path to achieving their dreams, while making the same possible for others.

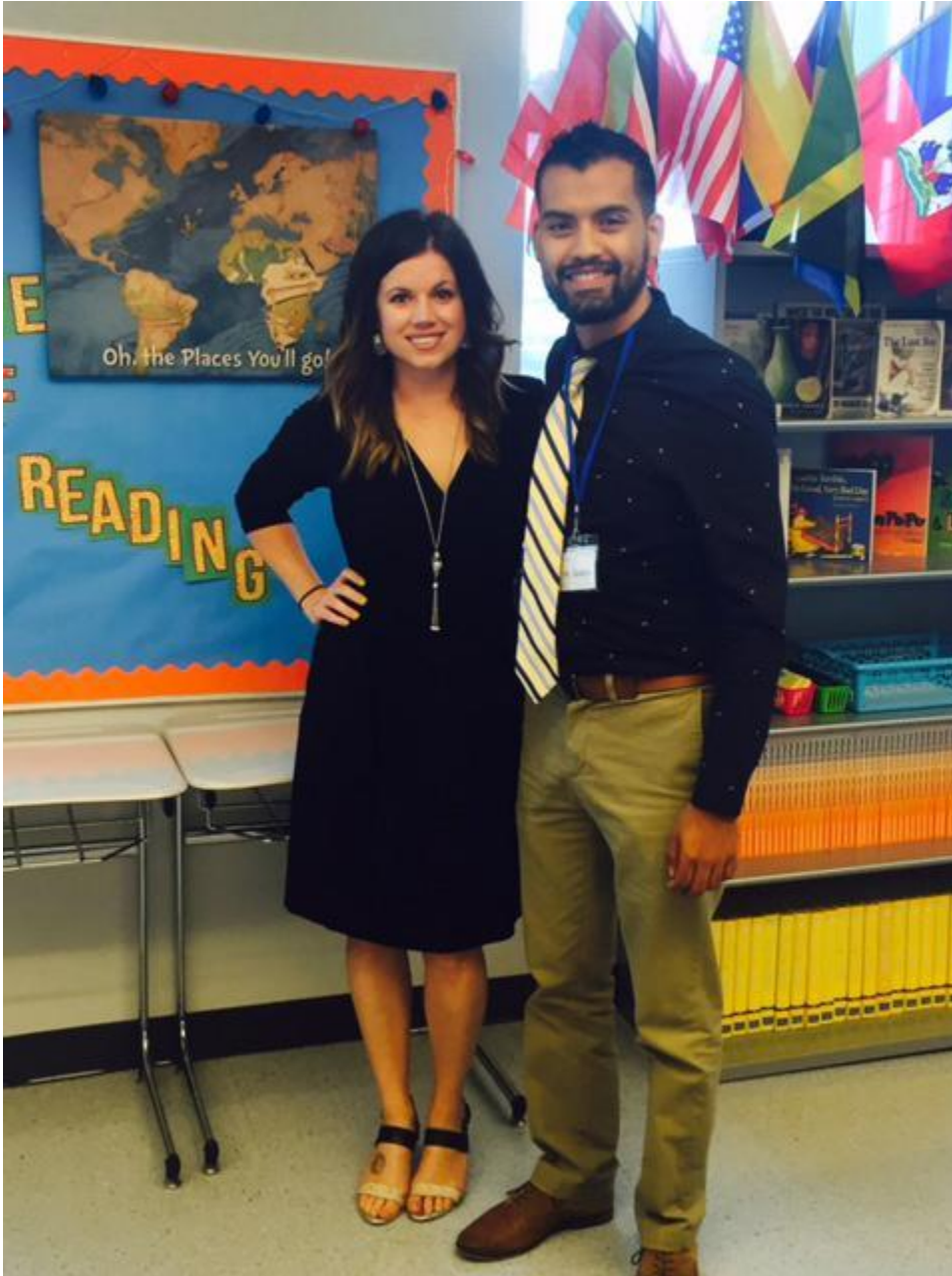
Heimback earned a bachelor's in sociology from the SIUE College of Arts and Sciences in 2011, and Kinnear achieved a bachelor's in English language and literature from the College in 2014. Both have gone through rigorous training through [Teach for America](#) and are now teaching in low-income urban schools.

“I knew I wanted to be a part of the solution to help solve inequities in education,” said Heimback. “While being a corps member with Teach for America is extremely demanding and challenging, it is equally rewarding.”

Heimback teaches fifth grade humanities in Brooklyn, N.Y. She also attends Relay Graduate School of Education in New York City, where she’s earning a dual certificate master’s degree in middle school and special education.

“I know that I am serving a population that is underserved, and it is my job to ensure that my students receive the same quality education that a student in an affluent school district would receive,” she explained. “SIUE played an incredibly important role in preparing me for this endeavor. My coursework was challenging and relevant, and I graduated feeling like I was fully prepared to pursue a career in education.”

Kinnear is making an impact closer to home, serving the Normandy Schools Collaborative school district in St.



Louis. She teaches ninth grade English and plans to begin graduate school next year.

“Every single day is rewarding,” Kinnear said. “Getting to work with passionate, lively, exceptional individuals provides an overwhelming amount of purpose in my life. My kids are brilliant. It’s my job to help them see that.”

She strives to instill a love of reading in her students and incorporates creative content in her teaching to increase student engagement.

“Through live theater, independent novels, poetic verse and oral interpretation methods, I have seen kids on the edge of their seats wanting to know what happens next,” Kinnear explained. “I have kids begging for more reading time. Such reactions to literature make me remember my own passion for the subject.”

Kinnear intends to shift her career path in the future and use her creative passion to teach adults.

“I specifically want to teach in correctional facilities, dedicating my life to inmates who desperately need skills and language abilities that will ideally set them up for success in life after release,” Kinnear said. “My goal is to make an impact, change lives and make sure my students have access to an equitable, attainable, valid education. I plan on spending the rest of my life chasing that dream.”

Both alums emphasize that their work involves not only preparing students to excel academically, but also helping them develop emotionally and socially, gaining confidence to pursue their bright futures.

“I hope to positively impact the lives of my students, bring more awareness about education inequity, and be a part of the solution to fix America’s broken education system,” Heimback said.

Central to SIUE’s exceptional and comprehensive education, the [College of Arts and Sciences](#) has 19 departments and 85 areas of study. More than 300 full-time faculty /instructors deliver classes to more than 8,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty help students explore diverse ideas and experiences, while learning to think and live as fulfilled, productive members of the global community. Study abroad, service-learning, internships, and other experiential learning opportunities better prepare SIUE students not only to succeed in our region’s workplaces, but also to become valuable leaders who make important contributions to our communities.