

**Marcos Dario Tufiño Cabeza**

Quito

**How many siblings do you have?**

2 sisters (Gisela, Damari) 1 brother (Darling)

**Do you have any pets?**

A little dog named Moon

**What are your favorite pastimes or hobbies?**

Listening to audiobooks, walking, visiting museums, watching movies, dancing, singing.

**Studies**

**Academic program:** International Business

**School:** The University of the Americas (UDLA)



**Graduation:** 2022

**What work will you pursue with your program?**

I hope to create a marketing and advertising agency or business consulting for small and medium entrepreneurs.

**The Foundation**

I met Margarita in 2004 at the CMT while she was singing with her guitar in the park of the CMT and I approached her because she sang beautifully and then I saw her again in my health class and she sang the same songs she sang before. I always wanted to learn English because where I am from (Muisne) tourists always came and spoke a language that I did not understand and that called my attention to understand; so when I heard Margarita spoke the same language, I asked her to teach me. Obviously, she did not accept immediately but after several years of persisting, Mike and Margarita agreed to teach me by reading books. Then together with Mike, we created a Speaking group where we spoke English every Tuesday and Thursday with the volunteers who came to visit, and so I made friends and learned the language better. Since that time Mike and Margarita have been by my side.

When I started with my studies, I was working and the deal was that I would cover 50% of the expenses. But unfortunately, after a few years I lost my job and it has been complicated for me to get a new one so they are covering 100% of the expenses.

The most memorable moment for me was being able to open my heart and be honest with myself about who I am as a human being and talk openly about my homosexuality with Mike and Margarita, as well as with some guys from the foundation and receiving a lot of love. It was important to me because being a black gay man in

Ecuador, despite having laws, it is still challenging to get the same job opportunities and not be discriminated against.

DEOF is the opportunity of a lifetime. Normally I have to deal with people who underestimate my capabilities and who question my abilities and DEOF (Mike and Margarita) have been the only people who never judged me, nor rejected me and who simply saw in me a human being with the same capabilities as any other person. It means a lot because they have been emotionally with me in the most challenging moments of my life and it means a lot because without this opportunity my life would not be the same.

#### **2024 Update:**

I am currently working as an immigration advisor. I have already served three years in this position and I lead a work team, which has meant a greater challenge on a personal and professional level. I have developed skills in planning, strategy, marketing and finance, which has helped the company consider me for a professional growth plan.

Last year I had the opportunity to travel to Colombia and Brazil and I started learning Italian on my own.