

Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* (Science) 2009 Hispanic Scholar Profiles

Brownsville, Texas

Name: Mark Garcia
High School: Mathematics and Science Academy; Brownsville, Texas
College: Texas A&M University; College Station, Texas
Intended Major: Biology



A research lab experience leads to a career path in science and health.

Mark Garcia, 18, graduated from the Mathematics and Science Academy in Brownsville, Texas. He earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while also pursuing his love for music and committing to multiple community service activities, including an effort to support La Esperanza Orphanage in Matamoros, Mexico and work to help sign children up for Texas' Children's Health Insurance Program. Garcia will major in biology at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. Garcia's teachers describe him as an independent thinker who takes on challenges. Proud of his heritage, Garcia says his parents provide an excellent example of cultural pride and commitment to education. Pursuing his interests in science, Garcia has already conducted biomedical research geared toward understanding the role of the eyes' photoreceptor cells in retinitis pigmentosa and age-related macular degeneration, two diseases that cause blindness. This early research experience helped shape his desire to pursue a degree in biology and contribute to research that improves diabetes prevention and treatment.

Name: Jose Pablo "JP" Llongueras
High School: Mathematics and Science Academy; Brownsville, Texas
College: University of Texas at Brownsville; Brownsville, Texas
Intended Major: Biology



A friend's illness inspires a research career path. Jose Llongueras, 18, graduated from the Mathematics and Science Academy in Brownsville, Texas. He earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while engaging in such community service projects as volunteering at his local hospital, working as a research assistant in a lab, and acting in local community theatre. Llongueras will study biology at the University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, Texas. He already earned almost half of the college credits needed to graduate in biology as he took college courses while completing his high-school diploma. His passion for biology started when his friend, Jonathan, was

diagnosed with a brain tumor in 2006. For two months, Llongueras researched brain tumors, and treatments and side-effects to better understand what happened to his friend. He realized biology is his calling. Llongueras' teachers describe him as an intelligent and fine young man who excels at solving problems in teams. He has already completed a number of research programs, which include studying the relationship of cardiovascular disease and fructose and examining diabetes in Hispanic communities. Llongueras is grateful for the support his large family gives. Everywhere he turns, he finds himself surrounded with people who continue to encourage him.

Name: Juan Perez
High School: Lopez High School; Brownsville, Texas
College: University of Texas at Arlington; Arlington, Texas
Intended Major: Mathematics

A student who loves math and science dreams of conducting a Pluto space mission. Juan Perez, 18, graduated from Lopez High School in Brownsville, Texas. He earned a 3.68 cumulative grade point average while also engaging in activities like tutoring, acting as a member of the Academics Math Team, and completing his high-school diploma while taking college credits at the University of Texas at Brownsville's Upward Bound Math and Science program. Mathematics has been one of his passions since second grade. His teachers say he enjoys discovering ideas and describe him as able to solve problems in creative ways, learn from mistakes and see the big picture. Perez, the first generation in his family to attend college, will study mathematics at the University of Texas at Arlington. He credits his parents' example of a lifetime of hard work as truly inspiring his determination and strength of character. Perez says knowing what his parents sacrificed to provide him with opportunities gives him the strength and will to achieve his goals. After college, Perez hopes to work at NASA and partake in a history-making project, like landing on Pluto.

Elizabeth, New Jersey

Name: Oscar Gonzalez
High School: Elizabeth High School; Elizabeth, New Jersey
College: New Jersey Institute of Technology; Newark, New Jersey
Intended Major: Mechanical Engineering



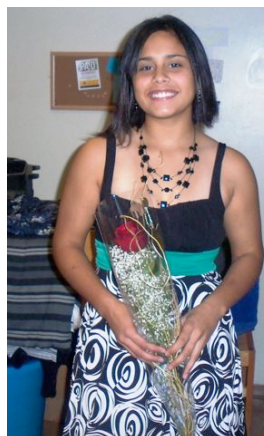
Dismantling a Christmas train set leads to fascination with science and a career path in mechanical engineering. Oscar Gonzalez, 18, graduated from Elizabeth High School in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He earned a 3.9 cumulative grade point average, while he tutored, acted as a member of the National Honor Society, Science Club, Political Science Club and Viva Technology, and participated regularly in the New Jersey Science League Chemistry I Competitions. Gonzalez, the first generation in his family to attend college, will study mechanical engineering at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. His teachers describe him as mature, positive and energetic, and someone who makes the most of any situation. Growing up, Gonzalez credits his parents' example of hard work and focus on education for his belief that he could achieve his dreams. His desire to pursue an engineering career started when he received a simple train set for Christmas and wondered why it started moving when he flicked the start switch. He used a screwdriver and dismantled it, finding an assortment of gizmos inside. When he flicked the switch, gears turned and the motor spun. This astounded him. He did the same when his family bought their first computer, unscrewing the cover, but this time he looked into a whole new world, he gazed into his future.

Name: Rosa Mejia
High School: Elizabeth High School; Elizabeth, New Jersey
College: Union County College; Cranford, New Jersey
Intended Major: Biology



Working side-by-side with her mother in a part-time job, a student saves for college to pursue a science and health career. Rosa Mejia, 17, graduated from Elizabeth High School in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She earned a 3.16 cumulative grade point average while also engaging in such activities as volunteering at Trinitas Hospital and Bonaventure Nursing Home and playing the saxophone for her high school's marching band. Mejia, the first generation in her family to attend college, will study biology at Union County College. Her teachers describe her as a committed student with a curious mind who has had a fascination for the sciences since her youth in Colombia. Mejia credits her parents with always emphasizing education's importance. Mejia says working with her mother in a part-time job as a teenager taught her the importance of saving for her education and enriched the strong bond between herself and her mother. Her family's support, pride in culture, and emphasis on education are values she treasures. They shape her passion for the sciences and fuel her desire to improve others' lives.

Name: Judy Rodriguez
High School: Elizabeth High School; Elizabeth, New Jersey
College: Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Cambridge, Massachusetts
Intended Major: Biomedical Engineering



A student honors her family's value of *Respeto* (respect) through hard work in pursuit of her dreams of a biomedical engineering career. Judy Rodriguez, 18, graduated from Elizabeth High School in Elizabeth, New Jersey with a 4.0 cumulative grade point average. She is active in her community tutoring advanced placement honors biology students and volunteering at her city's senior citizens programs, the American Cancer Society, March of Dimes, and more. Rodriguez, the first generation in her family to attend college, will study biomedical engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Her teachers describe her as setting an example of a dedicated student and someone who conducts herself in the most positive and honorable ways in all her endeavors. She credits her teachers and mentors in health centers where she has volunteered for shaping her desire to enter biomedical engineering. She desires to be an example as others have been to her. Judy believes that respect is an important part of her culture, recalling the many times she heard her mother tell her "*Respeto!*" growing up. By working hard, serving others, and being a mentor, as others have mentored her, Rodriguez hopes to demonstrate her respect for her family and culture.

Los Angeles, California

Name: Alejandro Aguirre
High School: Roosevelt High School; Los Angeles, California
College: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Intended Major: Mechanical Engineering



A student's work to harness the sun's power leads to pursuit of a mechanical engineering career. Alejandro Aguirre, 17, graduated from Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles, California. He earned a 3.91 cumulative grade point average while participating in such extra-curricular activities as serving as president of the Mathematics Engineering Science Achievement program (MESA) in his junior and senior years, working with team members to build award-winning engineering projects on solar energy and water conservation, and serving as captain of a team to build a solar-powered boat. Aguirre, the first generation in his family to attend college, will study mechanical engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Aguirre's teachers describe him as intellectually curious and creative. According to Aguirre, his desire to understand how mechanisms and technology work inspired him to seek a career as an engineer. He credits his family with instilling pride in his heritage and encouraging him to make a meaningful difference in the constantly changing technological world. Aguirre says his parents taught him not to accept expectations others had of him, but to achieve in challenging academic work. He gives credit to this lesson for leading him to discover his passion for engineering and believe he can do amazing things.

Name: Roxana Garcia
High School: Reseda High School; Los Angeles, California
College: Pomona College; Claremont, California
Intended Major: Neuroscience



A library visit and discovering a book on brain science leads to a lifelong fascination and desire to pursue a career in neuroscience and health. Roxana Garcia, 17, graduated from Reseda High School in Los Angeles, California. She earned a 3.86 cumulative grade point average while also participating in such activities as playing the piano and violin, working at a medical clinic, and competing in Science Bowl. Garcia, the first generation in her family to attend college, will study neuroscience and English at Pomona College. Her passion began when she discovered V.S. Ramachandran's *Phantom's in the Brain* in the library five years ago. Her teachers describe her as brilliant, multi-talented, motivated, mature, and warm with a great sense of humor. Garcia thrives on what she discovers through closely reading such materials as scientific texts and research papers. In fact, she keeps academic books on her night table for pleasure reading. Garcia's parents moved from Bolivia to give her the opportunities to fulfill her dreams, with nothing but a few dollars between them. Garcia dreams of joining Doctors Without Borders to treat patients and establishing libraries in Bolivia to bring the gift of learning to others. But most of all, she dreams of giving others the gift her parents gave her, the chance to fulfill her dreams and to reach her highest potential.

Name: Edson Mancilla
High School: King Drew Magnet High School of Medicine and Science;
Los Angeles, California
College: Columbia University; New York, New York
Intended Major: Biology



A grandmother's uncontrolled diabetes inspires a career path in research and endocrinology. Edson Mancilla, 17, graduated from King Drew Magnet High School of Medicine and Science in Los Angeles, California.. He earned a 3.9 cumulative grade point average while also participating in such extra-curricular activities as after-school labs, music, performance, and community service for causes like a Nickels for Nails campaign to help build homes. Mancilla will major in biology at Columbia University, specializing in cellular and molecular biology and researching endocrinology. His teachers characterize him as a diligent worker and dedicated

student and one noted his skills as a performer when he sang *"Me Robastes El Corazon."* Mancilla credits his parents with always emphasizing education's importance and refers to his father always placing a book in his hand. After his grandmother's death by cardiac arrest in 2008, an event brought on in part by uncontrolled diabetes, Mancilla's dream of becoming an endocrinologist solidified. He wants to work in communities like his, South Central LA, to encourage longer and healthier lives and dreams of making a difference in the field of diabetes.

Name: Lorena Ramos
High School: Sylmar High School; Los Angeles, California
College: California Lutheran University; Thousand Oaks, California
Intended Major: Biology



A fascination with discovery leads a student on a science career path. Lorena Ramos, 17, graduated from Sylmar High School in Los Angeles, California. She earned a 3.98 cumulative grade point average while also engaging in such community-oriented activities as working in a dental office, volunteering at her church, acting as a member of the Key Club and girl's tennis and track teams, and recently volunteering at the local polls for the 2008 election. Ramos, the first generation in her family to attend college, will major in biology at California Lutheran University. In Ramos' sophomore year, she joined the Sylmar High Math Science Technology Magnet, which offers a rigorous honors college-prep curriculum. She also made the Principal's Honor Roll

every semester of high school. Ramos' teachers describe her as mature, open and inquisitive, and possessing determination and mental agility. Growing up, Ramos' family expected hard work from her as it was a way to honor the traditions of her culture. With this mindset, she puts in as much effort as possible in any task she takes on. Ramos is fascinated by the body of scientific knowledge and inspired by how much is not yet known and waiting to be discovered. She is excited by the prospect of research and partaking in new discoveries.