

Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* (Science) Hispanic Scholars Program 2010 Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Profiles

Jina Balogh
Gladys Porter High School, Brownsville, TX
Engineering

Fondness of teamwork initiates career path helping others. Jina Balogh, 18, graduated from Gladys Porter High School in Brownsville, Texas. She earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while taking leadership roles in her school's National Honor Society, Technology Student Association, and varsity basketball team. She also participates in varsity volleyball, varsity choir, junior varsity track and softball, and volunteers at an animal shelter and zoo. Balogh plans to major in biomedical engineering. Her teachers describe her as a confident and intelligent individual that is fervent about education and passionate about life. Inspired by her parents, Balogh enjoys contributing to organizations she joins and is committed to the welfare of the team. She hopes to advance Hispanics and women in politics and the workforce by helping people's lives through biomedical engineering.

April Bello
Elizabeth Learning Center, Los Angeles, CA
Agricultural Sciences

NPR Morning Edition show inspires environmental research career. April Bello, 18, graduated from Elizabeth Learning Center in Los Angeles, California. She earned a 3.56 cumulative grade point average while also participating in such groups as student body, student site council, and science club, co-leading her school's Academic Decathlon team, and speaking for the Phi Delta Kappa association. Bello plans to major in agricultural sciences. Her teachers describe her as wise and with great work habits and personal integrity. Listening to a show on NPR's Morning Edition, "The Truth about Global Warming and Greenhouse Effects," Bello found love in understanding Earth in the political, economic and social realms, prompting her to volunteer at beach clean ups and habitat restorations. She also took part in a group that designed sustainable native habitats within school grounds, which maintained controlled water supply, invasive species and landscape. Bello seeks to provide her local community and the broader Los Angeles region with a path to create a sustainable Earth.

María Castro
Elizabeth High School, Elizabeth, NJ
Chemistry

Love for chemistry leads to certification as pharmacy technician and career path in pharmacology. María Castro, 16, graduated from Elizabeth High School in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She earned a 3.93 cumulative grade point average while participating in such groups as the Key Club, Honor Society, junior and senior class government, student government and the yearbook club. Castro plans to major in chemistry. Her teachers describe her as a friendly, compassionate, and confident leader who helps her peers. Her parents taught her to be honest and hardworking and have an optimistic outlook in life regardless of circumstance. Castro's interest in math and science started at a young age, and she takes as many challenging science

classes as she can. Her love for chemistry came at first sight and she already has achieved certification as a pharmacy technician.

Jennifer Chávez-Lanza
Reseda High School, Los Angeles, CA
Mathematics

Passion for discovery and helping others sparks career in medicine. Jennifer Chávez-Lanza, 17, graduated from Reseda High School in Los Angeles, California. She earned a 3.8 cumulative grade point average while participating in the Creative Writing Club, Spanish Club, Magnet Council, and Prom Committee and such activities as varsity cheerleading and peer college counseling. Chávez-Lanza plans to major in mathematics. Her teachers describe her as having a sense of purpose, tenacity and a kind and generous manner. She says she is always surrounded by people who love her and considers her family her biggest treasure in life. According to Chávez-Lanza, her passion for discovering new things drew her to math and science. Since second grade, numbers have been her friends. She finds importance in helping others and hopes to become a pediatrician to help children around the world.

Laura García
Mathematics and Science Academy, Brownsville, TX
Biological Sciences

Concern for family members inspires dream to prevent heart disease. Laura García, 18, graduated from the Mathematics and Science Academy in Brownsville, Texas. She earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while volunteering at beach clean-ups, coordinating an engineering program (X-treme Prep), and participating in an octathlon and her school's drama club. García plans to major in biological sciences. Her teachers describe her as a personable, cooperative individual with a heart for those in need. Her parents, her father an engineer and her mother a former pharmacist, inspire García to strive for the best and contributed to her interest in medicine and technology. Also, many of her family members have been diagnosed with cardiovascular problems, deepening her dedication to this field. García dreams of helping people suffering from disease as a physician and scientist specializing in preventative medicine.

Reymundo Gutiérrez
Mathematics and Science Academy, Brownsville, TX
Computer Sciences

A video on prosthetic limb research inspires a career path in robotics. Reymundo Gutiérrez, 17, graduated from the Mathematics and Science Academy in Brownsville, Texas. He earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while also founding and leading the Math and Science Academy Robotics Club, participating in the Computer Science Club and Science Academy Robotics Club and serving as vice-president of his church youth group. Gutiérrez plans to major in computer sciences. His teachers describe him as a disciplined problem solver who is also dedicated to helping his peers. Gutiérrez says his parents, especially his father, stand as great examples of hard work and perseverance. A video on prosthetic limb research sparked his interest in robotics and he has already interned at NASA JSC at Oklahoma State University and worked as research assistant at the University of Texas at Brownsville. Gutiérrez

hopes to contribute to the advancement of robotics and development of more natural prosthetic limbs, and to open his own business in the field.

Amalia Merino
Gladys Porter High School, Brownsville, TX
Civil Engineering

Time spent with landscape engineer leads to a career path in civil engineering. Amalia Merino, 18, graduated from Gladys Porter High School in Brownsville, Texas. She earned a 3.5 cumulative grade point average while participating in many choir groups, playing on a soccer team and volunteering at nursing home communities, her local farmer's market and the advocacy group, Down by the Border. Merino plans to major in civil engineering. Her teachers describe her as an energetic team leader who has an eagerness to help others. Witnessing her mother's hardships, Merino strives for a better education. Her interest in engineering started when her mother's friend, a landscape engineer, took her along on trips. Since then, Merino has worked as a computer assistant/customer service representative at RGV Home Décor. She says just the thought of designing and developing a structure or building that can facilitate the lives of many people makes her ecstatic.

Angie Ossa
Elizabeth High School; Elizabeth, New Jersey
Physical Science

Helping a neighbor after a serious accident solidifies career path in medicine. Angie Ossa, 18, graduated from Elizabeth High School in Elizabeth, New Jersey. She earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while partaking in her local hospital's pre-med program and playing on the school's basketball, volleyball, track and tennis teams. Ossa plans to major in physical science. Her teachers describe her as eager to learn and a positive peer tutor who respects others' opinions. Ossa's parents have always supported her and instilled in her a love of diverse cultures and backgrounds. Ossa developed a respect and admiration for doctors, which led her to partake in a local hospital's pre-med program. Her lessons there came in handy one summer when she helped her neighbor after a serious accident by calling for help and cleaning her neighbor's wounds. At that moment, Ossa says, she realized medicine was her calling.

Alejandro Ramírez
Santee Education Complex, Los Angeles, CA
Computer Sciences

Founding a graphic design and computer repair business is first step to career in computer science. Alejandro Ramírez, 18, graduated from Santee Education Complex in Los Angeles, California. He earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while drumming for a local band, doing graphic design for a production company and his school newspaper and working as student ambassador. Ramírez plans to major in computer sciences. His teachers describe him as talented, dedicated and entrepreneurial; he runs his own graphic design and computer repair business. The similarities between computers and the human body intrigued Ramiro and sparked his interest to study computer science. Ramírez's parents taught him the value of hard work and encourage him to continue his studies. Pursuing this interest, Ramírez has interned at

CD Tech Corps, a four-week training program for young adults in computer refurbishing, digital arts, business applications and budget management and leadership development training.

Jonathan Roldán
Elizabeth High School; Elizabeth, New Jersey
Biological Sciences

A trip to the Bronx Zoo sparks an interest in science and leads to a career path in research. Jonathan Roldán, 18, graduated from Elizabeth High School in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He earned a 4.0 cumulative grade point average while participating in his school's marching band, swim team, and National Honor Society, Hispanic Honor Society, Tri-M Music Honor Society, Key Club, Mind's Eye Literary Club, and Model UN clubs, where members simulate United Nations meetings and discuss and propose solutions to global issues. Roldán plans to major in biological sciences. His teachers describe him as a motivated and intelligent individual who welcomes challenges and works gracefully under pressure. Roldán feels honored and gifted for being raised in a traditional Hispanic family that educated him and guided him toward success. This took the form of his father teaching him to color inside the lines at age four to his mother's words of wisdom, "Be a proud Hispanic not only for your family, but for the entire Hispanic community in the U.S." Roldán considers himself a lifelong learner. His love for science started in the second grade when his science teacher introduced his class to paleontology. A school trip to the Bronx Zoo then sparked his interest in zoology. In high school, his passion turned into biology and chemistry. In college and beyond, Roldán looks forward to performing research in collaboration with faculty and science departments.