

**Angie Ossa**  
**Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2010**  
**Studied Bio-Medicine and Bio-Chemistry at Kean University**

When Angie was 15 years old, she heard a crash outside and found her elderly neighbor lying in the yard, bleeding. The woman had been sweeping and slipped on a patio, hitting her head on a hard edge. Angie called 911 and looked after her neighbor, putting pressure on the wound until the ambulance arrived.

It was in that moment that Angie knew she wanted to study medicine.

Angie moved to New Jersey from Colombia when she was in middle school. In high school, she applied to several elite colleges and was accepted, but the schools were expensive. The government would not offer her any support because of her immigration status. Angie was crushed.

Then Angie heard about the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars program and found out that her immigration status wasn't a factor. "It was just calling my name, like 'this is for you,'" she said. Angie applied and was selected.

Through the Alliance, the summer before her senior year Angie moved to Maryland and achieved her dream of working alongside NIH scientists. She studied pathways involved in one of the genes that cause cancer. "We would get a cell and tag it with a fluorescent dye and see if the pathway worked." When it worked the cell would light up. The purpose of the experiment was to learn how cancer forms and grows in order to try and stop it. "Even though I was the rookie in the lab, they would just let me do everything," Angie said.

One perk of her internship was that her schoolwork became even easier. "The things that I did over there [at NIH], maybe a semester later I was seeing them in school."

Angie was given Deferred Action status and graduated from college this past December. She aspires to go to medical school and become a trauma doctor.

Angie still keeps in touch with many of the students she met through the Alliance program. Across the miles, they Skype and email and encourage each other. "We all have kind of the same dream which is to go further."