

Alejandro Ramirez
Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2010
Studying Computer Science at the University of California Berkeley
Co-Founder of Robot Logik

When Alejandro got his first PC he just had to open it up and look inside. Worried he might break it, he first read tutorials online and researched each element. What he saw inside surprised him. He expected the parts to have meaning the way a bicycle's parts—the pedals, cranks and chains—make inherent sense, instead he says, “there was this green thing with a bunch of dots on it that somehow generates the picture.” Alejandro was stumped.

Fortunately, he didn't stop there. He read more tutorials, asked more questions and became an expert. Other students started asking for his help. Soon he'd built a small business repairing computers for friends, their parents and even his teachers.

Alejandro hoped to continue his computer studies at college but his parents couldn't afford to send him to a four-year university. So Alejandro did some research and found out about the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars program. He applied and was selected.

Because of the Alliance's support, Alejandro was able to accept the University of California Berkeley's offer of admission. He was excited, but also nervous. His first day on campus, he says, “I remember stepping out of the car and thinking I wanted to go back home.” Since he had refused to let his parents drive and instead came with another student, expecting he might find himself in exactly this situation, he was trapped. Looking back, he sees this decision as one of the smartest and bravest he's ever made.

At Berkeley, Alejandro went from fixing hardware to developing software. A technology firm called TUMIS heard about his work and contacted him. He began as an intern building blogs and enhancing their content management systems. The following summer, he was tasked with more complex projects and began learning the fundamentals of user experience and information architecture.

Then Alejandro and his brother started their own company, developing an education app to help parents of students who struggle with math. DevLabs, a branch of TUMIS, partnered with Alejandro and his brother, providing them with office space and legal support.

Alejandro is proud of all that he's achieved. Leaving home and living seven hours away from his family was difficult, but, he says: “Now I feel like I have the courage to take risks because I did once before and it worked out.”

When he thinks about what he would tell his teenage self about the ways his life would change in only a few years, Alejandro says of his younger self: “He wouldn't believe me.”

In addition to developing and launching other new apps, Alejandro hopes to learn new languages and travel to Tokyo. One day, he hopes to tell his parents that they will never have to work again.