

Heidy Morales

Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2013

Studying neuroscience at Bowdoin College

Interned at the University of Southern California, School of Pharmacy

At her Los Angeles high school, Heidy was always at the top of her class. Then she started college. "I was coming from a place where conversation at the dinner table did not involve science and did not involve current events," Heidy said. "For the first time in my life, I felt dumb."

Determined to fulfill her potential, Heidy started following the news and joined the film society, a creative writing club and the rugby team. She also asked her professors for help in her more challenging classes.

Growing up, the medical care Heidy and her family received was poor. In 2008, Heidy's grandmother died of an undetected heart condition. The experience stayed with her and inspired her to study medicine.

Heidy's late grandmother was an inspiration because of her work ethic and her bravery. Her grandmother immigrated to the U.S. from El Salvador on her own when she was still a teenager. Heidy is also grateful for the friendships her grandmother built. Her grandmother's former employer has been a great friend and mentor to Heidy and treats her like a granddaughter.

The Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars award has also been critical to Heidy's success. For her internship last summer, Heidy worked in the electrophysiology lab at the University of Southern California's School of Pharmacy, where she tested and analyzed FDA-approved pesticides in search of potential treatments for alcoholism. More specifically, her tasks included injecting egg cells, with cRNA, then observing and recording their behavior in response to varying amounts of these pesticides.

Heidy's long-term goal is to become a surgeon. After she graduates college, she hopes to join the Peace Corps and then go to medical school. With her determination and the solid foundation she's receiving from school and internships, Heidy is sure to go as far as her ambition takes her.