

Jina Balogh

Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2010

Studied civil engineering at Texas A&M University, Kingsville

Assistant structural engineer of transmission and distribution for Burns & McDonnell

When she was a kid, Jina's father never treated her like one. Her father, a chemistry teacher, always showed her that he valued her opinions and her voice. This might at least partially explain Jina's confidence and maturity.

A highly motivated young woman, Jina knows she's intelligent, but she says her determination is what drives her success. "I've set goals in my life and I've accomplished most of what I've set out to do."

Jina attended a magnet high school for science and engineering students and learned about the Merck/Alliance *Ciencia* Scholars program when a representative visited her school. "It spoke to everything that I was looking for, helping Hispanics in STEM fields."

Jina was accepted into the scholars program. She was admitted to Texas A&M University, Kingsville, where she studied civil engineering. Starting on the first day of school, Jina outlined a few goals: one was to graduate school without loans and another was to place first in a well-known design competition at her university.

Each summer, Jina did an internship with the Alliance's support. She chose these programs carefully, weighing how they might help her in the future. Her final internship was with Burns & McDonnell, an engineering consulting firm in Houston, which ranks #14 on *Forbes* list of top businesses to work for. While there, she helped design and locate permits for transmission poles —posts used to support power lines and other cables.

To save money, Jina chose an internship program that was paid as opposed to a volunteer one. She also chose to stay in Texas rather than work abroad. Still, the experience brought her to Houston from Brownsville and the firm paid for her housing. One of the best parts of her internship were the "lunch and learn" sessions, where Jina listened to professionals speak about their experiences in the industry and had an opportunity to network.

Through conscious decision-making, Jina was able to graduate Texas A&M without any loans. As for her other goal, in her senior year, Jina's team won "overall best engineering category" in the University's design competition. That same year, The Texas Society Board of Professional Engineers chose Jina as its Student Engineer of the Year.

Jina says the Alliance helped her through each step of her career. "It's more than just someone who's handing you a check and saying 'go for it,'" Jina says. The program's representatives were constantly emailing or calling to see how she was doing. Because of the Alliance she also met students who shared her passion for science. "I'm still friends with the girls that I met that summer. We still text and video chat and keep each other motivated."

Jina was hired by Burns & McDonnell and currently works in the firm's Transmission and Distribution department.