

Jose Pablo Llongueras
Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2009
Studied biology at the University of Texas at Brownsville
Research technologist in physiology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

When he was younger, Jose wanted to be a veterinarian. Then he discovered he was allergic to almost every animal, especially cats, so he decided to focus on humans instead.

Jose attended the Math and Science Academy in Brownsville, Texas, where his advanced level course work meant his last two years of high school dovetailed with his first two years of college. He majored in biology at the University of Texas at Brownsville.

Jose was accepted into the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars program during his freshman year of college. In addition to financial support through the scholars' program, Jose gained exposure to areas of science that he never knew existed.

As a college student and legal minor it was difficult to find internships, but the Alliance helped with that too. "It really opened up an entirely new network of people that are willing to take you on."

Jose spent his last summer after college interning at the Pasteur Foundation in Paris in the lab of Dr. Françoise Barré-Sinoussi, the virologist who discovered HIV in the early eighties. Jose's team was responsible for studying the immediate immune response following HIV transmission and searching for potential therapeutic targets. In other words, their goal was to find ways the body could naturally get rid of the virus.

"There were days I was sitting in lab meetings with a Nobel laureate and twenty other people," he said. "You kind of have to pinch yourself and look around and think how the hell did I get here?"

Currently, Jose is conducting research at Johns Hopkins on a deadly brain cancer, Glioblastoma multiforme, looking for genomic targets.

What drives him is the intellectual stimulation he gets from discussions in the labs and from lectures. "Even still, to go to a new talk, to hear some other famous scientist coming to Hopkins talking about their research and being able to understand it is astounding."

Jose says his mother has always been a role model for him. "I don't think I've ever met anybody as organized as my mom. She always follows through. She's just incredibly disciplined."

After finishing his post baccalaureate studies, Jose plans to join an MD/PhD program. "It's exciting that there's still a lot left to strive for," he says.