Jocelynda Salvador
Alliance/Merck Ciencia Scholar Class of 2012
Studying biomedical engineering at the University of California Irvine
Interned at the University of California Irvine’s Microvascular Therapeutics & Imaging Lab

When Jocelynda was 13, she visited her mother’s work for the first time. Jocelynda watched as her mother, a custodian, cleaned the concert hall floor on hands and knees. After that experience, not only did Jocelynda contribute more at home, but she also began to realize the importance of her education. Jocelynda promised herself that, once she graduated college and found a good job, her mother wouldn’t ever have to work or would at least be able to choose a job she actually enjoys.

Now that she’s in college, Jocelynda is studying biomedical engineering, a field that combines health care with science, technology and industry.

As an Alliance/Merck Ciencia Scholar and with the support of the Alliance, last summer she interned at her university’s Microvascular Therapeutics & Imaging Lab at the Beckman Laser Institute and Medical Clinic. There she explored the impact of Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) on patients treated with varying levels of radiant exposure, with the goal of improving PDT. This therapy is often used to correct vascular malformations, such as Port Wine stains.

Jocelynda says her lab professor has given her the freedom to work independently and instilled in her the confidence she needs to present her lab’s research at symposiums in the future.

Outside of science, Jocelynda is deeply curious about her heritage. She learned more about her Mexican roots through a project with an NPR affiliate that traced families from Mexico to Los Angeles. Her own family is from Oaxaca, one of the most diverse regions of Mexico.

Jocelynda is also very interested in exploring other cultures. Her own neighborhood is nicknamed “Korexico” because Koreans and Mexicans live side by side there. Jocelynda loves trying foods from other cultures and recently began studying Korean.

Jocelynda is the first person in her family to attend college and says her mother has always supported her dreams. “Even though I’m her daughter and there can be very obvious differences, we are more alike than you can see,” she said.

Now, with help from The Alliance, Jocelynda has become an inspiration to her mother. When Jocelynda began college, her mother began studying for her G.E.D. “Every time she passes a test she lets me know.”