

## **LORENA ULLOA**

**Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2011**

**Studying biology and Spanish at Grinnell College**

**Interned at the University of Southern California School of Pharmacy**

When Lorena was in high school, her favorite teacher was a recent college graduate who was personable, sharp and always eager to help. When Lorena learned Ms. Banky was teaching A.P. Biology, she enrolled. "If I hate it, I'll just switch to another class after the first semester," she told herself.

But Lorena loved the class. So much so that she's chosen biology as her major.

Through the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars program, Lorena was able to intern at the University of Southern California School of Pharmacy, where she conducted electrophysiology experiments on frog eggs. Lorena's research involved tracking the effectiveness of potential therapies for treating alcoholism in these small organisms. She enjoyed shadowing one of the graduate students and participating in lab meetings, where she compared her team's results with those of other teams testing different treatments for alcoholism on different proteins.

During her junior year, Lorena studied in Chile where she learned through clinical observation seminars and lectures about the differences between the health care system in Chile and the U.S.

On a tour of one of the poorest public hospitals in Santiago, Lorena met a patient with HIV/AIDS and cancer. He was terminally ill and the left side of his body was completely paralyzed but he seemed eager to talk to visitors. After their tour, Lorena and another student returned to see the cancer patient. They learned that he had been a student at the same college where Lorena was taking classes. He spoke about his love of jewelry and was very knowledgeable about the problems with the Chilean health care system.

After visiting Chile, Lorena says she learned that there's more to medicine than just opening someone up and fixing them. She found that connecting with patients is one of the most rewarding aspects of the job.

Instead of going to pharmacy school Lorena is now planning to obtain her master's degree in public health-epidemiology and to apply to become a Peace Corps fellow. Through the support of The Alliance, Lorena is on track to apply her love of science to the good of the world.