

**Mark Garcia**

**Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholar Class of 2009**

**Majored in biology at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX**

**Studying medicine at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston, TX**

As a confessed perfectionist, Mark's intrinsic drive helped him to excel throughout school.

Mark attended the Math and Science Academy in Brownsville Texas before majoring in biology at Texas A&M University. Mark says the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars program helped him see what it meant to be a doctor before applying to medical schools. "I had all the mentoring I needed," he said.

With the Alliance's help, Mark landed an internship at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School, where he shadowed doctors in the clinic and at their practice. The doctors also conducted "mock interviews" preparing Mark for rigorous grill sessions that medical schools use to determine who to accept.

At Harvard, Mark also helped conduct stem cell research and studies of infectious diseases and drug applications linked to muscle recovery in burn patients. He graduated from Texas A&M and is now in his third year of medical school.

As a medical student, one lesson Mark has gained is that the importance of maintaining a non-judgmental stance.

Occasionally, patients are forced to share troubling secrets in order to protect their health. "They put themselves in a vulnerable situation where they could be judged and judged kind of harshly," Mark said. Giving each patient the best care regardless of who they are or mistakes they've made is part of what it means to be a good doctor.

Recently, Mark returned to his high school, the Math and Science Academy in Brownsville, as the school's keynote speaker where he shared with students the importance of having balance in your life.

In addition to being a doctor, Mark is also a talented salsa dancer. He has performed in Las Vegas for the past two years. Mark reminded the students of his alma mater not to forget their other passions. It's difficult, he said, but "if you truly love something you will make time for it."

After graduating from medical school, Mark plans to specialize in either pediatric, family or internal medicine.