

# Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* (Science) Hispanic Scholars Program

## Supporting a new generation of Hispanic scientists

The National Alliance for Hispanic Health (the Alliance) is proud to announce the establishment of the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* (Science) Hispanic Scholars Program, a new partnership improving Hispanic student access to higher education and degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).

In a **\$4 million commitment**, the Alliance is being supported by the Merck Company Foundation and the Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE) to establish the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Hispanic Scholars Program.

During the next five years, the Program will provide 50 promising Hispanic high school students from Brownsville, TX; Elizabeth, NJ; and Los Angeles, CA with \$42,500 in college scholarships and internship support to pursue STEM degrees. In addition, 125 Hispanic college students nationwide majoring in a STEM field will receive \$2,000 scholarships.

### THE NEED

Education and science career opportunities are top priorities for Hispanic parents and students. However, despite the value placed on education and science careers, the national science base does not adequately benefit from the talent of Hispanic communities.

- **Hispanics are underrepresented in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) fields.** While Hispanics represent 17.4% of the population 18-24 years of age and 9.5% of all undergraduates at 4-year institutions, they represent only 7.6% of bachelor's degrees awarded in STEM fields. (*National Science Foundation: Science and Engineering Statistics. May 2008.*)
- **Hispanic undergraduates have a strong interest in the sciences, but are not adequately supported.** Hispanics are more likely than non-Hispanic white students (22.7% v. 18.0%) to enter college with an interest in declaring a major in a STEM field but are less likely to ultimately attain a bachelor's degree in a STEM field. (*American Council on Education: Increasing the Success of Minority Students in Science and Technology. April 2006.*)
- **For many Hispanic students, financing college is a significant barrier.** Hispanic undergraduates (62.0%) are more likely than non-Hispanic white undergraduates (44.0%) to have remaining need after receiving their college financial aid packages. (*U.S. Department of Education: Student Financing of Undergraduate Education. August 2006.*)

*"I have no doubt that Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars may be the next generation of Nobel Prize winners, lab directors, professors, university presidents, and mentors leading scientific discovery that improves our health and well-being."*

— Dr. Lauro F. Cavazos  
former U.S. Secretary of Education



## THE RESPONSE

Research findings on retention of Hispanic college students majoring in STEM fields emphasize the importance of adequate financial aid and scholarships; research experiences for undergraduates; and incorporation of students into the academic culture, through close contact with faculty mentors. These factors are all key determinants for student success.

Building on the Alliance's 35-year record of achievement in supporting Hispanic youth and providing science mentors and the expertise of MISE in improving science education, the Program will include the following financial, mentorship, and professional development opportunities over the next five years:

**Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars:** A total of 10 Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars will be named each year of the five years of the program. Application will be open to promising Hispanic high school seniors from Brownsville, TX; Elizabeth, NJ; and Los Angeles, CA who commit to major in a STEM field in college. Scholars will receive substantial support, including:

- \$20,000 in scholarships (paid \$5,000 per year over each of four years of college);
- Summer internship stipends up to \$22,500 (up to \$7,500 for each of three years) to work in research settings;
- *Ciencia* mentor support at their college and from a national mentor network;
- Annual *Ciencia* Scholars Symposium where Scholars present original research; and
- Peer-to-peer support, including a Scholars area on the Alliance *Ciencia* website.

***Ciencia* National Scholarships:** A total of 25 *Ciencia* National Scholarships in the amount of \$2,000 each will be awarded each year of the five years of the program. Application is open to college students nation-wide with a declared STEM major. In addition, scholarship recipients will have access to the Alliance *Ciencia* web-based support network to pursue additional scholarship and internship opportunities.

## KEY DATES

The first class of Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars and *Ciencia* National Scholarship recipients will be supported for the school year beginning the Fall of 2009. The following are the key application and notification dates:

**September 16, 2008** — Application period opens.

**January 16, 2009** — Application deadline.

**May 2009** — Applicants notified.

### Application Registration:

Students and families interested in the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars and *Ciencia* National Scholarships can register now to receive applications on September 16, 2008. There are three ways to sign up:

**Online:** Visit [www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org)

**Text Message:** Text "CIENCIA" to 30644

**Phone:** Call 1-866-783-2645 toll free

**You can also write to us at** — National Alliance for Hispanic Health; 1501 Sixteenth Street, NW; Washington, DC 20036; Attn: Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Hispanic Scholars Program



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