

2019 MOLA Scholars



Jonathan Alcantar

Jonathan is a second-year medical student at the University of Illinois at Chicago interested in pursuing internal medicine. As a first generation Mexican-American, Jonathan witnessed the toll that health barriers and low income had on several loved ones and family members. Jonathan is determined to incorporate clinical research into his professional trajectory, and is currently researching a low cost, clinical tool to accurately diagnose acute chest syndrome in sickle cell patients.



Virginia Alvarado

Gina is a third-year medical student of Salvadorian heritage, currently enrolled at the University of Illinois Chicago School of Medicine. She has shown her commitment to the Latino community through her leadership in her school's Latino Medical Student Association chapter, UIC's Urban Medicine Program, *Medicina* Scholars, as well as with her active presence within MOLA's medical student committee. Gina's MOLA Scholar project will explore her interests in dermatology and Latino health.



Jacqueline Bellefontaine

Jacqueline is currently a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she is pursuing dual Masters degrees (Master of Public Health and Master of Social Work). Inspired by the impact that chronic disease has had on her own family, Jacqueline plans to explore how access to health insurance and cost of care impact care utilization in specific populations. She hopes to use this research experience and her graduate degrees to inform future work as a leader in health care policy.



Angélica Cabrera

Angélica is a current graduate student at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where she is pursuing a Master of Public Health with an interest in Child and Maternal Health and works at the Hispanic Center of Excellence. Angélica has faced a myriad of challenges in her own career path, an experience that has inspired her to pursue a career in Medicine. As an aspiring pediatrician, she intends to focus her research efforts and graduate degree on ways to mitigate asthma, obesity and diabetes in adolescent health in the Latino population.



Mariel Galván

Mariel is a junior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign majoring in Integrative Biology. Identifying as an Afro-Latina woman, she has witnessed the paucity of appropriate representation by professionals who look like her. Determined to be the physician role model that she did not see, Mariel intends to pursue basic and translational research on stressors and challenges women scientists of color face, and whether these might also impact larger communities of women of color.



Elizabeth García

Elizabeth is a second-year medical student at the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago, and has already made herself known here at MOLA. She has made enormous contributions to the MOLA Mentorship Program, as well as defining compelling and clear goals for her own career. As a daughter of Mexican immigrants, she appreciates the importance of Latino representation in healthcare. Through her MOLA Scholar project, Liz would like to expand her interest in mentorship by examining the efficacy of various mentorship structures in meeting the needs of Latino students.



Nelly González-Montes

Nelly is a Mexican American and DACA scholar, currently enrolled at Loyola University in their dual MBA/Medical Degree program. She will earn her MBA at the end of this year, and continue her clinical education with an interest in Psychiatry. At Loyola, she is also a part of the Global Health Honors Program. Nelly hopes to use her journey and Latino heritage in order to address cultural stigmas surrounding mental health.



Itzel López Hinojosa

Itzel is a first-year medical student con *muchas ganas* at University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, where she is also the LMSA co-president and an Annika Rodriguez Scholar. Before coming to medical school, she was the founder and president of MedX, an organization that tackled health disparities in St Louis through educational events, advocacy and community service. Through her MOLA Scholar project, Itzel will examine how different generations understand and approach mental health, particularly in the Latino community.



Kryzta Peña

Kryzta is an accomplished college student, set to graduate this year with a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health from the University of Illinois Chicago. Her intention is to impact the Latino community as a physician, and she is well on her way, as an active volunteer with the ALAS-Wings Breast Cancer Support Group and mentorship programs such as PROMYS. Kryzta also has considerable research experience, winning an award for her oral presentation regarding "the effect of social capital on patient misconceptions about breast cancer" at the 2018 Latino Health Symposium. Though her MOLA scholars project, Kryzta would like to build on her previous research related to health disparities.



Noé Vázquez

Noé is a senior undergraduate student at Roosevelt University majoring in Psychology. Despite the daunting challenges that he faces as an undocumented student, he has managed to develop extensive experience in exploring the role of nutrition in exacerbating health disparities in immigrant communities. He is also a standardized patient helping to train medical students in use of Spanish in medical settings, and has volunteered countless hours as MOLA's professional photographer. Noé plans to apply to UIC's MD/PhD program, where he hopes to develop bedside tools to facilitate bilingual communication—an idea that he will launch as his MOLA Scholar project.