

June 1, 2020

Dear Scholarship Donor,

*I am honored to be one of the recipients of the Rotary Club of Santa Cruz Sunrise Scholarship Committee. Thanks to your generous support, I am the first in my family to attend and complete college.*

*As you know, I decided to go to Dominican University of California in San Rafael. I chose to go there because their curriculum for science majors was adapting into the standards which medical schools look for. This constant development makes it easier for students to go to medical school much faster. I was enthusiastic to see that they offered a research program where no student would be left out. There isn't a competition whether who would get in or not. This opportunity has enhanced my resume tremendously alongside helping me prepare for medical school. This allowed me to explore laboratory research first hand to know if I wanted to pursue it more or not. In Spring 2017, I was able to enter a chemistry research lab which emphasized on Breast cancer and testing enzymes specifically COX-2 to see if it's a factor in the development of cancer or metastasis. Other than the great curriculum and pre med resources, the campus was extremely beautiful. The location was perfect, close to nature and the city life. It was helpful being three hours away from home. This allowed me to become my own independent woman while being close enough to stay in communication with my family.*



*I cannot stress enough how nerve-racking my first year of college was. Moving out of my house and into a whole new place was terrifying yet exciting because I was beginning a new chapter in my life. That year, I focused a lot on my academics and physical health. Through all the APs, AVID class, and mentorship I received in highschool, I felt very prepared to succeed in my classes. I decided to major in Biology as well as joined the Honors Program. In my second semester, I focused on entering a research lab which I ended up getting into Breast Cancer research, I would continue this research for the rest of my college years. During my Spring break I had the opportunity to travel abroad to Costa Rica through the Honors program. I did a week long exertion in learning about Sustainable Living. Participating in the sustainable living immersion re-establish strong connections to the natural world through an introduction to the various aspects of sustainable living, including relationships to food, energy, waste management, responsible production and overall consumption. In my first year, I learned a lot about adapting to change by learning how to study for each class and changing the routine each semester.*

*In my second year of college, I began really strong by becoming an Orientation Leader for the incoming students. An organization I continued the rest of my college years. Helping*



daunting throughout the first year with many questions but no one to turn to for guidance. I was happy to become a resource for new students who had similar questions. During my Fall semester I also received a work study job at 10000 Degrees. 10,000 Degrees is a nonprofit organization that helps students with low-income backgrounds get to and through college. I was able to work for the scholarship department as an intern. Fortunately, I received their scholarship aid all four years as well personal support, and college advising. I reached out to students who were having trouble with their applications, checked applications before distributing their check money, data entry for incuries, talked to parents/ students who came into the office asking for help. I felt like working closely with the committee who awarded scholarships was very meaningful because I was able to work closely with low-income students and related to the struggles. As a scholarship recipient, I was so grateful to get some peace of not worrying about how I am going to pay for education. I also enjoyed the workshops they held about finance, internships, studying tips, applying for FAFSA, ect. They were all very informative and helped me succeed in college. I also like that we got paired with an advisor who is always there to answer questions and support us further through or college journey.



My academics were going super well so I decided to add a chemistry minor to enhance my major and prepare more for the MCAT. I was also accepted into my school pre-med honors society. This society has really helped me in preparing for medical school and the journey that lies before me. I really enjoyed that I was able to connect to students who had the same end goal as me and that we weren't eachother competition but motivators and helpers. In many cases, we hear often that our classmates are our competition and not our friends but the beauty of Dominican small community and class is that it takes the competition away and incorporates collaboration.



In the summer of 2018, I had the pleasure to travel to Székesfehérvár, Hungary with Atlantis. The Atlantis Project Fellowship is a program for students who are passionate about medicine and yearn for international exchange experience in order to gain valuable clinical experience by shadowing doctors. I spent a whole month learning in the emergency room, OB/GYN, general surgery, Cardiology, gastroenterology, and last week I was in pediatrics. I learned so much from each specialty, I especially learned that medicine is the career for me. My favorite rotation was general surgery because it's the specialty I am most interested in, it also showed me how much you can do in general. OB/GYN is a speciality that surprised me enough



to consider it as a speciality. Working with a pregnant mom, operating on infants that hadn't even been born yet and getting to watch the babies being born healthy enough to go home was amazing. I especially liked seeing the progression of a baby over the day till it got to home. Throughout the weeks, I was able to travel to Austria, Croatia, and Rome to explore and learn more about the different cultures. I have always loved to travel when I get a chance, especially to new places where I can learn about different countries. This opportunity really opened my mind about how different our Medical System is from Hungary, and where each could be improved. It also confirmed me that I was on the right track towards a career I want.



My junior year began really strong by finishing up my chemistry minor and adding a psychology minor because I need to learn more about the human mind. I was really excited to finish my chemistry minor and be recognized by entering the honor society. Without realizing it, I was accepted into my biology class honors society. It was a great recognition for me and all the hard work I had been doing to get accepted into the national honor society in my academics. It was also a reminder for me to continue working hard in everything I was doing. In the fall of my junior year, I also became the Atlantis Ambassador for my school. I told professors about the program so they could know it was a resource, I advertised it so students could approach me and ask me. If they wish to sign up then I would help them with the application and prepare for their interview. During my junior year, I helped 6 students go abroad to different countries. It was a great feeling helping these students get exposed to medicine where doctors just want to teach and expose you to everything. One of the challenges I had over the years was seeking doctors in my area to shadow. Most of them stated that they had too much going on in their schedules. This resulted in the lack of opportunities due to minimal connections. For me, it was heartbreaking that I needed to have connections to doctors in order to get exposure so I looked for a program that wouldn't judge me for not having the connection but instead wanted my commitment. Atlantis gave the experience I was looking for as well as allowed me to do the same for other students in the same situation.



During the summer after my junior year, I focused on maximizing my time and getting more medical exposure. I ended up taking a 14 week boot camp in Arizona to become licensed as an National EMT. From learning how to deal with stressful situations in the workplace to having the confidence to serve as a leader in tense circumstances. As an EMT, I had the opportunity to perfect the basics of collecting a patient history and performing a physical exam, a necessity for any type of physician. Working as an EMT taught me how to excel in



high-pressure situations, making medical school tasks ranging from taking exams to scrubbing into various surgeries much easier.

My senior year was the shortest of them all or so it feels like it. I finished all my classes with high scores. Throughout the year, I worked with the Global education program in our school to collaborate with Atlantis to create a special trip for Dominican students alone. I was very satisfied to get the school to pay for half of the program and offer 1 to 3 units of credit for the internship. It was a huge accomplishment being able to work with the global education office and Atlantis to create a special trip to Spain for 28 students. I was also able to finish my breast cancer research which is still being continued by other students. I have had the pleasure to work alongside Dr. Mary Sevigny in her Research lab. Much of her research interests have involved studying enzymes and glycosylation and their role in the development of certain kinds of cancers. Her current research involves studying the pro-inflammatory enzyme cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) and its role in cancer. Specifically, her research focuses on how the natural modification of COX-2 with carbohydrate groups (glycosylation) may affect downstream cellular events that promote cancer progression. These studies may help to further establish and refine the use of COX-2 as a prognostic marker in cancer and aid in the development of more effective therapies. Sadly, my time came to end online like everyone else in my situation, but it was okay because the end was here.



My plans at this stage are to apply to medical school and prepare for my MCAT. I am strongly interested in the Saint George University school of medicine in the caribbeans My goal in medical school is to get into the surgical program. I am not sure what type of surgeon I wish to be at the moment but I do know it's the career I want to pursue. I am also getting recruited by the US Army to help me finance the next huge phase of my education. In the process of my application to medical school I will also be working as an EMT to get more hands on experience. It will also allow me to see patient interaction in the ambulance because I have realized that patient care doesn't begin at the hospital but the first moment a first responders makes contact.



The scholarship award gives me an opportunity to earn skills that will serve the medical community. It is allowing me to focus on paying my medical school applications and EMT licencing exam instead of getting a job inorder to earn the money. I would like to personally thank you for your generosity: Without scholarship patrons willing to support medical education, students such as myself would be unable to pursue advanced healthcare degrees. My passion for medicine is matched only by the curiosity I have



*only by the curiosity I have for the human body and the need to give back to impoverished communities, so my decision to specialize in Surgery comes from the need I have seen in third world countries. I was able to travel to El Salvador where medical necessity is very limited. I would like to one day return to third world countries like El Salvador and offer my surgical skills to patients in need cost free. Joining doctors abroad would be a great way to give back to my own community as well as millions of people who need a little help.*

*Once again, thank you for the vote of confidence. I am committed to my education and to the healthcare field, and one step closer to becoming a doctor, thanks to your continued generosity and the Rotary of Santa Cruz Sunrise Scholarship Committee.*

*Great Appreciation,*

*Karen S. Navarro Polanco*

