



PRESS ADVISORY

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

\$4 MILLION INVESTMENT SUPPORTS AMERICA'S NEXT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS

WASHINGTON, DC – The National Alliance for Hispanic Health (the Alliance) announced today the establishment of the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars Program, a new partnership improving Hispanic student access to higher education and degrees in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The Program is made possible through a \$4 million grant from The Merck Company Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the research-based pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., Inc. This is the largest grant to date that The Merck Company Foundation has made to the field of Hispanic education.

The Alliance will work with the Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE) to implement the Program. This partnership builds upon the Alliance's 35-year record of work in the Hispanic community and expertise in supporting youth and improving the science base and the expertise of MISE in improving science education. 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. These predominantly Hispanic communities have a history in working with the Alliance and MISE. In addition, 125 Hispanic college students nationwide will receive \$2,000 scholarships.

"Building on a distinguished history of Hispanic pioneers in science, a new generation of discovery begins today with this landmark investment of \$4 million in Hispanic students," said Dr. Jane L. Delgado, President and CEO of the Alliance today in announcing establishment of the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Hispanic Scholars Program. "It gives us great pride to be working with Merck in opening this new phase of the Alliance's innovative *Ciencia* initiative to support Hispanic students and improve the nation's science base."

"We are pleased to partner with the Alliance on a program that gives these bright and highly qualified students with a passion for the sciences the opportunity to contribute and make a real difference in advancing these fields," said Adam H. Schechter, President, Global Pharmaceuticals, Merck & Co., Inc. "Merck is a company committed to scientific innovation and helping to develop and mentor scientific talent has been a long-standing, important focus for the Company."

"I know what a positive impact such support can have in your life," said Dr. Lauro F. Cavazos, former U.S. Secretary of Education and a member of the Alliance Board of Directors. "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."

Today's announcement of a \$4 million investment in Hispanic students pursuing STEM studies comes just weeks after an experts meeting of the National Academies, which reported that the U.S. is continuing to fall behind in math and science education and that new resources are needed to "rise above the gathering storm."

According to Dr. Carlo Parravano, Executive Director of the Merck Institute for Science Education, "Investment in scholarships to reduce the financial burden of college, coupled with mentorship and lab experiences, can have a significant impact on students pursuing degrees in a STEM field. Today's announcement is critically important to encourage students to continue their studies and to pursue careers focused on innovation and scientific discovery."

The first of five years of awards under the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Hispanic Scholars Program announced today will be made in May of 2009. Two types of awards will be made.

- **Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars.** Hispanic high school seniors who reside in Brownsville, TX; Elizabeth, NJ; or Los Angeles, CA and who will pursue a college degree in a STEM field are eligible for a \$42,500 award (\$20,000 in scholarship funding, and up to \$22,500 in internship support). Scholars also will receive a mentorship with an Alliance *Ciencia* liaison and participate in an annual *Ciencia* Scholars symposium where the Scholars will present the results of their research, engage in lectures by professional scientists, and participate in workshops designed specifically for the Scholars in a variety of subject areas.

- **Ciencia National Scholarships.** Hispanic college students nationwide with a declared STEM major will be eligible to apply for a \$2,000 scholarship. Recipients also will receive *Ciencia* online support via a website, which will provide information on research news and opportunities and encourage peer communication and networking.

Students and families interested in the Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars Program are invited to call toll-free 1-866-783-2645, visit the Alliance's website at www.hispanichealth.org, or text "CIENCIA" to 30644 to sign up for online applications which will be first available on September 16, 2008. The application deadline will be January 16, 2009 and the first class of Alliance/Merck *Ciencia* Scholars and *Ciencia* National Scholarship recipients will be notified in May 2009.

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About the National Alliance for Hispanic Health

The National Alliance for Hispanic Health (the Alliance) is the nation's foremost science-based source of information and trusted advocate for Hispanic health and well-being. The Alliance represents thousands of Hispanic health providers across the nation providing services to more than 15 million each year, making a daily difference in the lives of Hispanic communities and families. For more information, visit www.hispanichealth.org or call the Alliance's *Su Familia* Hispanic Family Health Helpline at 1-866-783-2645.

About the Merck Institute for Science Education

Created in 1993, the Merck Institute for Science Education (MISE) is an award-winning program to improve science education and raise the levels of science performance for students from kindergarten through 12th grade. MISE is funded through a 15-year, \$35 million commitment from The Merck Company Foundation. Now expanded to include college and graduate-level education, MISE works to build capacity in the biomedical sciences through partnerships with higher education institutions. For more information, visit www.mise.org.

About The Merck Company Foundation

The Merck Company Foundation is a U.S.-based, private charitable foundation. Established in 1957 by the global research-driven pharmaceutical company Merck & Co., Inc., the Foundation is funded entirely by the Company and is Merck's chief source of funding support to qualified non-profit, charitable organizations. Since its inception, The Merck Company Foundation has contributed more than US\$524 million to support important initiatives that address societal needs and are consistent with Merck's overall mission to enhance the health and well-being of people around the world. For more information, visit www.merckcompanyfoundation.org.