

## Winston Salem Foundation Presentation

Good morning everyone,

Thank you for being here this morning and thank you to the Winston Salem Foundation for their invitation. My name is Natasha Morales-Castellanos and I am currently a junior at Salem College. I have been blessed to receive the Foundation's F.A. and Charlotte Blount Scholarship for the third time this year as well as awards from the John Russell Jarman Scholarship, the Otis B. and Genevieve Parrish Scholarship, and the Kate B. Reynolds Scholarship. The Winston Salem Foundation recognizes all that you as donors do for your scholarship recipients but this year I'd like you to get to know more about what we as scholarship recipients think of what you do and how much it means.

As I mentioned, my name is Natasha. My mother and I migrated to the United States from Mexico when I was four years old. We moved often when I was younger; I attended three different elementary schools and I went back to all of them before I finished the fifth grade. I went to two different middle schools and it wasn't until high school that I attended the same school through graduation. Throughout the first few years, my mother would watch me, as many immigrant mothers do, feeling helpless due to a language barrier as I struggled to soak in all that I was learning. Nonetheless, I valued my education and was eager to learn as much as I could. I valued it not only because of the financial stability it could mean for my family, but I recognized how hard my mother had worked and how much she had sacrificed for it to be within my reach. You see, I am a first generation college student, the first of three children. My mother and my siblings are very important to me. For this reason, I try to instill in my siblings how essential education is. My desire to share a passion for education is not limited to my siblings, however. I hope to share this with other students just as mentors have

done with me. I saw how my first grade teacher went above and beyond what being a teacher encompasses by continuing to mentor me to this day. I watched as my high school teacher took the time to search for scholarships for me. I have witnessed throughout my education all that my mentors have done for me and I hope to have at least half of the impact they had on me on others.

I graduated from Glenn High School in 2012. At Glenn, I was the secretary of student government and Spanish club. I was the vice president for the French club, president of the French national honors society and captain of the math academic team. I was a member of the Winston Salem Youth Council, national honor society and Crosby scholars. I had thirteen years of perfect attendance and graduated salutatorian while working two jobs during my last year of high school, one of which I've had since I was thirteen. I tell you this with a modest heart, not to force your admiration but for you to see that I, like other aspiring immigrant students, should not have been as limited as I was to attain a college education. Due to paperwork requirements I could not fulfill, I was limited not only due to my family's income but something I could not control. Thanks to organizations such as the Winston Salem Foundation, I was able to graduate knowing that I could further my education and increase my opportunities of a better future regardless of those limitations.

At Salem I have learned it's important to maximize my college experience. I am the secretary of our Hispanic organization and the vice president of the Omicron Delta Kappa Leadership Honor Society. I was nominated as one of eleven students to help the incoming first year students as a mentor. I planned academic events, book discussions, read, edited and replied to their class papers and strived to be available for them both in class and out. From this, I learned that being a mentor is a

very fulfilling experience, especially when mentors have been such an important part of my life. This fall I will continue to help incoming students as an orientation leader. As a communications committee member, I will help organize a professional women's conference. This past school year, I was nominated and hired as a chemistry and math tutor. Starting in the fall, I will be an honor guide. I am still taking karate as a purple belt and am an assistant helper for lower belt students. I continue to volunteer in the Hispanic League's Middle School Achiever's program by visiting local middle school ESL students and encouraging them to follow the college path. I have done independent study research with Salem's physics professor since my freshmen year.

Last summer, I was chosen to be a fellow for a ten week, on campus, undergraduate chemistry research fellowship at Wake Forest University. I had the honor of working alongside a graduate student under the guidance of a research advisor. As part of the program, I was able to receive mentorship from my Salem advisor and my Wake Forest research mentor. We met throughout this past academic year to discuss and edit my career plan on which they gave me valuable insight. I was able to give two poster presentations for the research I did at two different research symposiums. I learned a lot about research, public speaking and career planning. This summer, I was accepted as a Translational Science Center intern at Wake. I worked ten weeks, on campus on an organic chemistry project. I was able to be more independent on my research decisions and have gained knowledge in other means of chemical synthesis. As you can see, I enjoy keeping myself busy and because of this I have learned one other thing during my college experience. I have learned that I am not superwoman, as much as I'd like to be, and that I have to balance everything that I want to be a part of along with my school work and my family, because they come first. I realize that I am not perfect and that there will be times

when I won't get the results I desire but that if I keep striving for a goal, I will obtain it in the long run and will feel even more accomplished for the journey.

As for my future aspirations, I plan to graduate from Salem College in May 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in chemistry and math. Upon graduation, I intend to continue pursuing my goals by attending graduate school to obtain a PhD in chemical engineering. I aim to be a chemical engineer and to start a tutoring and college information program for first generation immigrant students and parents.

My advice for students is to meet new people. There are inspirational people all around us, potential mentors who can offer us great advice and guidance. Furthermore, continue to push yourselves. You have gotten this far, now go even further. Explore different clubs, organizations, hobbies and volunteer activities. Be mentors; you wouldn't have gotten to where you are if not for the mentors that helped you along the way, now it is your turn. Keep yourselves busy and always keep your biggest goal in mind. Try not to stray from your path but if you do, make sure you do it in order to find a better one. Stay true to your beliefs and don't be afraid to acquire new ones, remember you are now only a small part of what you will become. :)

To Dr. Blount and to my other scholarship donors, words can't express the gratitude that I feel. None of what I have experienced in college would have been possible without the help I received from you. Having faith in myself allowed me to keep moving forward but having others trust me allowed me to push past my obstacles to prove myself worthy of your trust. You see, my goals are a combination of what my family and I hope for my future as well as what people like you see in me even when I don't always see it in myself. I thank you once more for bestowing me with your trust and for allowing me to get one year closer

to my goals. To all donors, I encourage you to continue to bestow this trust because it is as invaluable to me as I'm sure it is for all of the recipients present. You are doing more than helping us attain an education, you are giving us hope and a chance to be mentors to future students, as well as give back to our community. Thank you for all that you do.