

## CHOICE

Discuss goals, background, financial need, and personal commitment to community involvement.  
Limited to two pages.

I remember my first day of middle school when butterflies fluttered in my stomach as I stepped out of the car at my new middle school. I begged my dad to get off with me, but hung over and in need of sleep, he did not care, and he just drove off. I grew up with a drug addict/alcoholic father, and to be able to learn from that and become a courageous, wiser, and more independent person is to succeed in many aspects in my life. I will not look at this moment as downgrading but as an opening of light from a dark hole, a light that has led me through the pathway that I am on now as a senior. I want to look back on childhood and be able to smile about the good memories that have shaped who I am. I want to appreciate my hard work as an individual and to not regret anything that has already past. If I feel accomplished and content with life and can honestly say I am on the right path that I think I am meant to be in life, I have succeeded. I never thought I would be taking college classes from the University of Colorado at Denver and from Front Range Community College in addition to high school. Not only do I want a steady lifestyle for me, but also for my brothers and sister, as well as my parents. The beginning of the long run, my freshman year as a college student begins this fall. I have mixed emotions towards everything: leaving home, making new friends, classes themselves, independence, and work! It overwhelms my mind at times of what can go wrong, but I am confident in my capabilities.

I am the first female on my mom's and dad's side of the family to go college. All older female cousins from my mom's side got married and became housewives right after high school, like traditional Mexican women. I always think back to the book *Macho* by Victor Villaseñor, where the men think they have to act "macho," ruling the house, keeping the woman to just do chores and take care of the family. But, a girl named Esperanza in the book sought out education, a different life. I am that girl, seeking a different life from all my cousins who chose to get married and not explore everything the world has to offer. I am that girl who wants to show them that it is ok to break tradition; time is passing, things are changing, and it is time for Hispanics to seek out the good in the world.

When my uncle, Nicholas Sarmiento, graduated from law school from the University of Colorado at Boulder, I remember him telling us at dinner that it was up to us Hispanics to change the world, to increase the number of Hispanic college students and to better our culture and the way that people view us. Hispanics are viewed as people who don't have the capabilities of doing what Americans can. Often, we are stereotyped as minorities who just know how to scrub floors and do construction work. But, I feel that society has put down the Hispanic culture enough for the Hispanics' mentality to believe they will never be good enough. They are scared to go to college, afraid to be out of their comfort zone, so they just stay where they are in life. As a Hispanic woman, I am the role model for all my cousins, around 50 of them! I will be the first woman "en mi familia" to attend a university. I have already impacted some of my cousins; they see the work I put into my scholarships and school work, and I know they begin to think that they need to start doing something with their life and education.

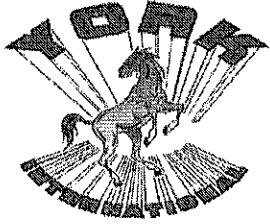
My actions have already influenced another uncle. He used to tell my mom that my dad was too hard on me when it came to school, but he came to live with us for about 2 months, and all my work and determination changed his views. He started pushing my cousin to go back to school. It was very shocking because he used to say, if they don't want to go to school, we cannot do much about it. After living with us, he saw the importance of education; my cousin is now attending the PIMA Medical Institute. To know my hard work has already influenced one person is a huge accomplishment. Even more, I want to help the undocumented students that actually want to do something with their lives, that want to help the communities where they have lived their whole lives. I have friends struggling to get money, because most scholarships require citizenship, they cannot apply for financial aid and they still have out-of-state tuition. This motivates me not to give up, because I see them and they cannot do anything about being undocumented. I can help represent my race that is so underrepresented in higher education and socioeconomic status. I know I will influence other Hispanics to improve our communities and change them for future generations.

There are five children in the family and my dad is the only person that works to support the family. He is a concrete pump operator; it is an outside job which means he has to work in either freezing or hot weather for up to 13 hours per day. Both of my parents used to work and this brought so many responsibilities upon me when it came to taking care of my 4 younger siblings, but I cannot complain because my parents had to go out and work to provide a roof over our heads. My mom is currently not employed because my two year old brother needs extra care due to his disability.

I do see that my parents have to provide financial need for 4 others after me, which is why I have been applying for scholarships like there will be no tomorrow! It will be a relief for everyone if I would just win enough scholarships to get through 4 years of college without a huge debt. I have applied to over 20 scholarships, but haven't received any yet. The Pell grant that I am eligible for is \$3,500 which is comforting! I have spent sleepless nights, Christmas break, and weekends writing essays for many scholarships, I know my hard work will eventually pay off.

My capabilities will help me travel the world and help communities; I will help them communities I was meant to help in my lifetime. Life will be nothing but a challenge, but with my family, God all the good values I have been taught, my life will be a success as much as it will be a challenge. My vision is to become a pediatrician. Living with a little cousin who has a heart transplant has made me really curious about the human body and all the research that occurs. Walking around the Children's Hospital, being able to see the children in need has hugely impacted me. I visualize myself doing research with other bio-medics trying to find a cure for someone who needs a transplant where we can just perform the surgery and be able to tell them, "have a nice life." Right now, my goal is to finish my senior year strong and excel in undergraduate school, so I can have a spot guaranteed in medical school. Its nerve racking, but all I know is that I want to impact and leave my print in many people's lives. The doctors have helped my cousin, Daniel, through 4 years of treatment and therapy, and I want to be there for other families.

# York International



9200 York Street  
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March 12, 2013

Dear CHOICE Scholarship Committee:


IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ANY ONE STUDENT FOR A SCHOLARSHIP IN THE PAST 4 YEARS AT YORK INTERNATIONAL, I WOULD CHOOSE ALONDRA SARMIENTO ABOVE ANY OTHER. In my 11 years as a school counselor, I have NEVER had a student work so diligently and apply for more scholarship opportunities than she...and still have such a struggle to find funding for college. Even today as I write this letter, while other seniors have a half day of school, Alondra is by my side, hours before others, diligently writing her essays for her scholarship application.

Alondra Sarmiento: my quiet, positive, consistent, intelligent student. I appreciate her for the brightness she brings-each time I see her, I immediately feel better. I didn't realize how much I appreciated this from her until I learned of her difficult childhood. With her father heavily involved in drugs and alcohol, a younger Alondra was subjected to become independent and face normal childhood fears without a safety net. I can only imagine that she did so with the grace and character I witness from her every day. Thankfully, her father acknowledged his frightening lifestyle and turned to his faith and family for survival. Many children might have acted out, infusing their hearts with anger, but Alondra continued to have the utmost respect for both her parents, today focusing on the outcome rather than the past dysfunction. Even more, she enthusiastically supported her family by caring for younger siblings every day as her parents worked long hours to provide for them. Every day for three years of her high school career, she took on this "parenting role," modeling hard work and optimism for the younger ones. Her family responsibilities and commitments church and school leave her with little time for other activities, but she still dedicated what little free time she had to serving her community with Food Bank of the Rockies, teaching Bible studies to 3-5 year-olds and working with the Hope Festival.

I remember when Alondra transferred to York. I was excited that she came with good grades and watched as she thrived in an academic environment she felt truly challenged her, earning a 4.0 GPA and the distinction of Director's Honor Roll in her first semester. In addition, she tested into college level courses and successfully completed 9 credit hours her junior year. She continues with college classes this year and will have 21 college credits by the time she graduates high school.

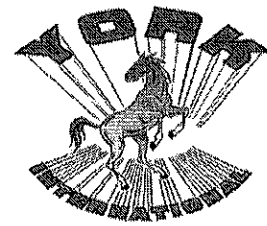
Last summer, Alondra spent 5 weeks at the University of Colorado at Boulder Pre-collegiate program, taking college courses, living in the residence halls and learning what college life would be like. Being the oldest and first in her family to go to college, Alondra is a change agent. She will not only break the cycle of struggle and lack of education in her family, but she will share her future successes with her high needs community, where over 70% meet the guidelines for poverty.

Any amount of scholarship funding will help ease the burden of expense for Alondra and her family-she is absolutely worth the investment.

Sincerely,   
Misti Gossett-Thrower  
School Counselor

# From the Desk of Mr. Munoz

York International - 9200 York St. Rm. E103 - Thornton, CO 80229



To Whom It May Concern:

As a teacher, my goal is to persistently challenge my students with concepts and ideas that might shake their foundational views. At an International Baccalaureate candidate school, the level of rigor and pressure can be hard on students, but shapes students into virtuous students with a great deal of integrity. Alondra Sarmiento is a student who has these attributes and has become a leader in our school. In every endeavor she may seek, it is my privilege to recommend Alondra Sarmiento for acceptance of the CHOICE Foundation Education Scholarship.

Two years ago, Alondra started the year in my Economics class where she grew to appreciate the intricacies of finance, both on a local and global level. Last year, I saw her explode with ideas in my Civics class. After learning about the events of 9/11, Alondra formed solutions to finding a viable peace process in the Middle East. Upon grading this, I asked her to lead others through the process of how to evaluate current affairs properly and this process is now a standard in my class that each student must attain. The transformation from explaining to synthesizing in Alondra's schoolwork and then expound upon it for her peers is proof she is ready for a collegiate setting.

Alondra is a reserved person and takes her education very seriously. This is partly due to her family's past. Her father has struggled with alcoholism and drug addiction for most of Alondra's life. Only recently has he made changes, which have improved the father/daughter relationship. From the experiences of her childhood, she's taken the initiative to pursue excellence in her educational career. This personal desire indicates that she is ready for the workload of a university.

Not only has Alondra used her personal experiences to learn from, she has used her volunteer experience to gain insight into what is needed for a future in pediatrics. From child care, to being a teacher's assistant for younger students at our school, Alondra has created a deep understanding of how children function. This knowledge has been furthered by holding religion classes at her church, which was an experience that allowed her to give her personal story and how religion has influenced her life in a positive manner. Now, as a senior, she is a part of the district-wide Senior Leadership team as an ambassador to our school. Her role in this group is to organize all events for seniors in our district. All of these experiences have shaped her for college. The drive that Alondra has to serve her community is impressive and is exactly why she would be a perfect candidate for the CHOICE Education Foundation Scholarship.

I grew up with two parents who had the ability to provide more than what was necessary for an upbringing. From my own experiences and travels, I have seen tragedy in the lives of children from around the world. This has shaped my objective in life to serve and educate the young. Never did I expect a student of mine to deal with so much difficulty at such a young age and want to succeed even with road blocks that she had to deal with. Alondra's story has broken my heart and affirmed my objective in life.

As a person, Alondra has a special place in my heart. She's worthy of any scholarship, but especially the CHOICE Scholarship. She is one of many that comes from an unfortunate state and is a student whose goal is to succeed. Traditionally, students like her are not given the opportunity that the CHOICE Education Foundation Scholarship would give to her. I have no problem recommending her for the CHOICE Education Foundation Scholarship. She would be a perfect fit for this scholarship and use it wisely. The opportunity would contribute to the already fantastic student and person that Alondra has become. She has expressed great interest in this scholarship and I am honored to support and endorse her application submission. This would help continue the pursuit of achieving her creative ideas, enhancing her knowledge, expanding her beliefs, and forming her views on life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Munoz', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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