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ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF LATINO
ADMINISTRATORS AND SUPERINTENDENTS

JUNE 2024

AZALAS

CELEBRATING THE
SENIOR SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS
of 2024





Executive Director's *Message*

The June Newsletter is recognizing our recent AZALAS High School Senior Scholarship Recipients. It is due to our generous sponsors at a Diamond Level and higher that allow us the opportunity to offer scholarships.

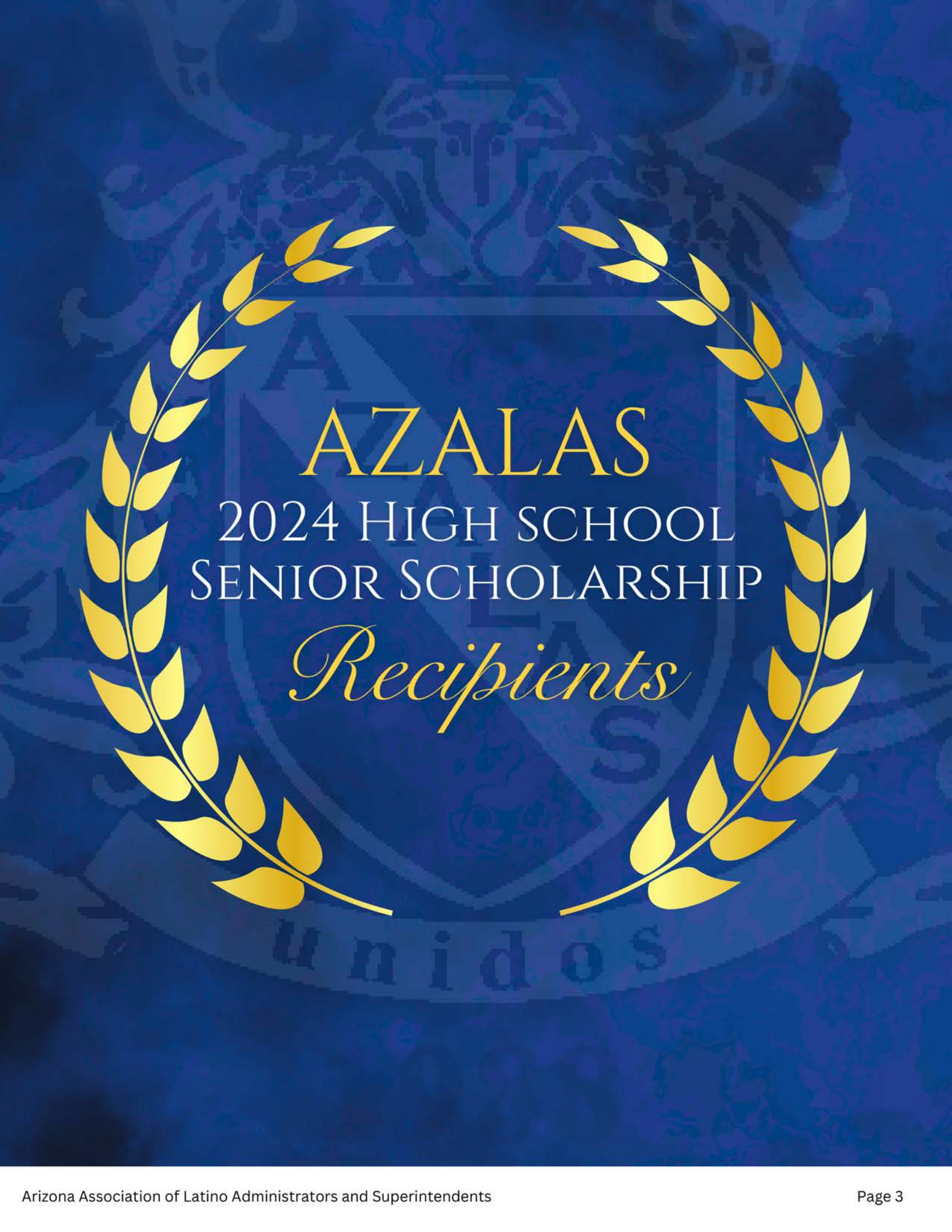
Every Spring, AZALAS seeks high school senior applicants for 20, \$1,500 scholarships. This year we had 126 applications. Each application is read and rated by two different evaluators and scores are averaged. We recruited current administrators, retired educators and community members to be evaluators. We are recognizing these 23 individuals in this newsletter, as well. The following school districts had recipients of these scholarships: Catalina Foothills, Douglas and Nogales Unified School Districts; Agua Fria, Phoenix, Tempe, Tolleson, and Yuma Union High School Districts. These recipients are eligible to apply for additional \$1,500 scholarships for the next three years through AZALAS.

This newsletter will provide you with a glimpse about each recipient, using their own words and recommendations from their counselors. The AZALAS Executive Board and Sponsors are so proud of what these students have accomplished in high school and their plans for pursuing a college degree. We hope that all graduates are determined to keep learning because education is needed to achieve what they want in life. Parents and teachers have provided support, guidance and resources and know these graduates are ready to enter their next chapter.

I hope that when you take time to read about each of these recipients that your heart beams with pride. I am confident that our future leaders are grounded with strong, family beliefs and will use their intellect to seek answers to make sound decisions.

Dr. Marvene Lobato



The background features a large, faint watermark of the AZALAS logo, which includes a shield with a scale of justice, a book, and a sun, surrounded by the text "AZALAS" and "unidos".

AZALAS
2024 HIGH SCHOOL
SENIOR SCHOLARSHIP

Recipients

2024 Scholarship Recipient



DIEGO
Baca

Catalina Foothills
School District

“Of physicians in the U.S., only 6% of them identify as Latino. Dedicated to becoming a physician in this underrepresented group, I look forward to finding ways to solve health problems within the community, becoming a voice for Latinos. On the other hand, my Mexican roots have also plagued our family with certain health risks. In my undergraduate time, I look forward to finding ways to improve our knowledge on diabetes through research in the endocrinology and diabetes field. By finding new ways of managing and preventing diabetes, I want to help not only my family, but the rest of the Latino population.”

- Diego Baca, Catalina Foothills High School

“Diego intends to major in chemistry or biochemistry, as he has shown passion for the subject. He is one of the most dedicated hard-working, motivated students I have had the pleasure of working with. He does not shy away from challenging situations and instead embraces the opportunity to learn from them.”

*- Andrea Lopez,
Outreach & CTE/JTED Internship Coordinator
Catalina Foothills High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



ESTEFANI
Chavarria

Douglas Unified
School District

“ My desires and perspectives on myself have been greatly impacted by my Latina identity. I have a strong desire to work at a clinic or hospital where I can directly help Latino patients and give them the support and care they need. I want to enhance healthcare access in our community and significantly impact the lives of my fellow Latinos by utilizing my language skills and cultural understanding..”

- Estefani Chavarria, Douglas High School

“Estefani is a respectful and responsible young lady who was attentive in class, excelled academically and on a personal level, and worked well with her peers. Estefani has participated in HOSA for the last three years and has qualified for the International HOSA Leadership Conference each year in the Health Care Issues Exam. Estefani was always quick on her feet and ready to take on the challenges of designing, conducting, and analyzing original

*- Martha C. Alonso ATC M.Ed.
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



GISSELLE
Figueroa

Douglas Unified
School District

"I have developed a goal of wanting to complete my education at a university as a first generation student. I want to go above and beyond completing my university degree by getting a doctoral. With gaining my doctoral, I can achieve another personal mission of mine which is to eliminate racial discrimination in healthcare."

- Gisselle Figueroa, Douglas High School

"I have had the pleasure of knowing Gisselle for four years, during which time I have had the opportunity to witness her dedication, determination, intellect, and passion for learning firsthand. Her interpersonal skills, good judgment, and self-discipline make her a deserving recipient of such an important scholarship."

*- Angelica Sologuren, Art Teacher
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



VALERIA
Guerrero Torres

Tempe Union High
School District

"In Mexico, I experienced a notorious absence of academic outreach opportunities in my institutions. After obtaining my biological sciences degree, I will focus on planning and providing educational outreach opportunities. Whether I may be a guest speaker in an AP biology class or sponsoring a school science fair, I will be a role model for the younger generation of future women scientists. As a Mexican artist and future scientist, I will proudly influence my community and beyond.."

- Valeria Guerrero Torres
Mountain Pointe High School

"Ms. Guerrero served as a leader in several arenas by achieving excellent grades, providing thought provoking classroom discussion, exhibiting an unrivaled work ethic, and displaying a professional maturity that was difficult to match by her peers. Academically, Ms. Guerrero has established a phenomenal resume. She is an outstanding student and will continue to impress with her academic prowess."

- Sergio Holguin
Social Studies Department Lead
School Improvement Coordinator
Mountain Pointe High School

2024 Scholarship Recipient



ERIKA
Gutierrez Romero

Tolleson Union High
School District

“Honoring a life of tradition, I established my purpose to be the one in a new generation to create a new life for my family and me. My family’s legacy is what motivates me to strive for the best I can in my lifetime. I aspire to be a first-generation female to attend college and enter aerospace engineering. I am reminded to put in the work ethic every day in my academics to be able to earn the opportunity to reach the stars my family’s generations have lived under.”

*- Erika Gutierrez Romero
University High School*

“Erika is being recognized this school year as a Top 10 Senior due to her academic accomplishments. The combination of her impressive PSAT score and grade point average has earned her National Hispanic Recognition by College Board. I am most proud of the help she has given our student services department in her role as a peer mentor. While the main role of a peer mentor is to provide one-on-one guidance to other students, Erika has made this role grow and evolve. She has demonstrated how much more can be done and has therefore helped create opportunities for future students to learn and build their resume.”

*- Brigitte Ochoa, Counselor
University High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



ALIA
Hernandez

Douglas Unified
School District

“Living in a developing city on the US-Mexico border, I have my Hispanic heritage very close to me and my heart. Seeing the lack of healthcare in my community and witnessing its wounds firsthand defined my mission in life. I aspire to become a doctor (specifically a pediatric emergency physician) and to bring more clinics, doctors, and equipment to my community. I owe to my heritage and my culture, and I want to pay it back in any way that I can. The desire to pay that love and support forward is what keeps me on my feet in my journey towards my career and success.”

- Alia Hernandez, Douglas High School

“I have known Alia for three years, and she has always demonstrated a drive to learn and be more successful in her studies. More than once, I challenged her with something new, and she always finished gracefully and successfully. Alia is extremely hard-working when it comes to academics. During her years of high school, she has taken part in HOSA, and SkillsUSA, Swim Team captain, has been a tennis manager, and is an officer in the Douglas High School National Honor Society.”

*- Mrs. Bobbi Morales, English teacher
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



LUIS
Hernandez

Douglas Unified
School District

“When I look back on the history of my family, I see stories of not only struggle and hardships but of advancement and success. Identifying myself with a group of people who, through history, have been able to overcome challenges with excellence impacts me. My Latino heritage not only influenced my life up to this point, but it has influenced how I want to live my future. I have been raised on a belief in perseverance and determination through further education or knowledge. My Latino or multicultural heritage is about beliefs and traditions that will allow me to continue a life that was once a dream for my ancestors.”

- Luis Hernandez, Douglas High School

“Luis is extremely knowledgeable and skilled. He excels academically and is an ambitious individual. Luis has also had a positive impact in our community by volunteering with local clubs and agencies. He displays an excellent work ethic and is extremely motivated. He continuously strives to excel in everything he does. His academic commitment is clear in his goals and accomplishments.”

*- Diana Martinez, English Teacher
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



GIOSUE
Hickman

Agua Fria Union
High School District

"My journey to establish myself as a Hispanic-Italian American began in high school, where I excelled both academically and athletically. Drawing inspiration from Hispanic leaders like Juan Ponce De Leon and Pedro Morales, I learned to navigate challenges with resilience and determination. Given the help I need to pay my tuition, I will be able to focus my energy to accomplishing my goal of graduating with a biochemistry degree, leveraging my knowledge and experience to contribute to society through teaching and written works. Giving back and sharing knowledge has always been my passion and ultimate goal, and I am committed to making a positive difference in the world.."

- Giosue Hickman, Canyon View High School

"Giosue is a laser focused student athlete with an unwavering commitment to excellence. Giosue has always shown work ethic and maturity far beyond that of the majority of his peers. He is consistently pushing himself to achieve his best and help those students around him succeed as well. Giosue's relentless work ethic and commitment to excellence prove that hard work and determination know no bounds. His success both on and off the mat serves as an inspiration to all who know him."

*- Stephanie Parker, Mathematics Department
Canyon View High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



ELENA
Lopez

Yuma Union High
School District

“Our heritage has shaped my parents, who in turn shaped me into the person I am, a proud Latina who values hard work and aspires to be a nurse. It’s a long and difficult journey to become a nurse but my heritage has always helped me understand that if I work hard enough for something I’ll be able to have the desired outcome. All my success has been thanks to my heritage, my family, and my friends. Two of my goals in life are to make them proud and to be able to provide not just for my family, but also for others who are in need. My mission in life will always be to be financially stable so I can give back to my parents and those in need.”

- Elena Lopez, Cibola High School

“Elena Lopez is humble, lighthearted, and mature beyond her years. She is self-motivated and has a desire to succeed in life. A review of her transcript and resume will verify her willingness to take rigorous courses and perform at a challenging level. As impressive as Elena’s intellectual traits are, I feel her real strength lies in her personal characteristics. Elena’s involvement in school and the community is truly impressive. She is one of Cibola’s student workers. She works in the bookstore as a technology support clerk, and does an exceptional job. She is friendly and professional in all of her interactions with students, parents, faculty and administration. Cibola High School is fortunate to have such a remarkable student.”

*- Teresa J. Davis, Counselor, M .Ed.
Cibola High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



ANELISA
Madero

Douglas Unified
School District

“My Latino heritage has had a tremendous impact on all aspects of my life. Growing up in a predominantly Latino community has directly impacted my values and overall beliefs. My heritage has had a deep impact on my life goals, mission and my desire to create an impact within my community and the world around me. Growing up it had never dawned on me that Latinas can be doctors, engineers, pilots, etc. This has influenced my desire to impact the world by instilling an understanding of how impactful it can be to see Latinas in higher education jobs and male dominated fields. I would like to impact the world by creating and contributing to more representation and opportunities for Latinas.”

- Anelisa Madero, Douglas High School

“Anelisa is an extremely intelligent and motivated student, which is evident in her success at Douglas High School. Her character and motivation have proven to be the key to her academic success. In addition to her academic achievements, Anelisa shines in her volunteer service. She is a member of the City Youth Program and participates in various activities and projects which benefit our community. This experience has developed her leadership skills and she is seen as a role model for other students”

*- Diana Martinez, English Teacher
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



VALERIA
Manriquez

Douglas Unified
School District

“Being a Latina has empowered me to keep going and do what I dream to do. I have learned a lot from my family and my surroundings to not give up and always stand up when I feel like going down. I aspire to be a great doctor, and being a Latina and caring for others has been my greatest motivation to keep going towards this field. Keeping up my hope and my effort to get to accomplish this one day has also empowered me to keep going..”

- Valeria Manriquez, Douglas High School

“Valeria is a respectful and responsible young lady who is attentive in class and excels academically and personally, working well with her peers. In addition, Valeria is a charming young lady with a cheery disposition, a willingness to learn, and determined to become a leader. Valeria has been a dedicated member of our Biomedical HOSA Chapter and has become someone I can always count on, no matter what is needed. Valeria can be shy sometimes, but once she feels comfortable, she is a force to be reckoned with.”

*-- Martha C. Alonso ATC M.Ed.
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



IVANA
Miranda

Douglas Unified
School District

“My parents have taught me that education is one of the most important things in life. After I graduate high school, I plan to attend the University of Arizona. Here, I would like to get a bachelor’s degree in chemistry, and then after four years apply to Dental School and specialize in children. According to the CareQuest Institute for Oral Health, 76.5 million adults in the U.S. do not have dental insurance and go without preventative dental treatment and procedures they truly need because they cannot afford them. I would like to impact society by providing low-cost dental services.”

- Ivana Miranda, Douglas High School

“Ivana is a very responsible and hard-working student. She currently has a 4.0 GPA and has received the following academic honors/awards: National Honor Society, Diamond Scholar, Academic D, National Society of High School Scholars, and has placed third in state competition for HOSA in Public health. She wants to study odontology and specialize in children. I think that career and specialization is a perfect fit for her because after meeting her, the adjective most likely used to describe her is sweet. She hopes to make a difference in both sides of the border to make sure children, especially the Latino children in her community receive treatment regardless of cost.”

*- Joel Ramirez, AP Spanish
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



LILIANA
Miranda

Douglas Unified
School District

“For some time now, the decision was made to study for a Bachelor of Science in Pharmaceutical Sciences. Yet, my ultimate goal is not to just graduate. Looking at the research for the statistics of success as a Latino woman in my dream job, Clinical Pharmacist, is quite intimidating. According to the website Zippia, there are over 185,283 clinical pharmacists currently employed in the United States. However, only a total of 5.8% are Hispanic or Latino meanwhile a total of 61% are white. Looking at these facts doesn’t terrify me, instead it motivates me for the upcoming times when I’m part of these statistics.”

- Liliانا Miranda, Douglas High School

“I have had the privilege of knowing Liliانا for the past two years, first as her counselor and later as the advisor for the Key Club where she currently serves as an officer. Throughout this time, Liliانا has consistently impressed me with her dedication, hard work, and academic excellence. In addition to her role in the Key Club, Liliانا has always been a diligent and hardworking student. Her good grades are a testament to her intellectual curiosity and strong work ethic. Last semester, Liliانا achieved straight A’s in her coursework, showcasing not only her academic abilities but also her determination to excel in all she does.”

*- Mia Torres, MSE, M.ED, Counselor
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



CHRISTIAN
Martinez

Douglas Unified
School District

"I think of us Latinos as strong, proud, reliable workers who are really skilled at what we do. I want to show that we are more than what people make us out to be. I will get my degree in Electrical Systems, make a significant advancement in micro-electronics, and become an engineer that can show the world I can be successful, while still being proud of my heritage."

- Christian Martinez, Douglas High School

"Christian is an active student at Douglas High School. Christian is dedicated to his success. He has maintained a 4.0 GPA while getting involved in sports and clubs. He is also active in the SkillsUSA Drafting Division. He is a member of the swim team and the track team. He currently serves as the Swim Team Captain and is a member of the Student Athlete Leadership Council (SALC) for Douglas High School. He is beginning to recognize that his peers look up to him. Christian Martinez is truly deserving of your scholarship program, and I recommend him to you without reservation."

*- Bianca L. Hernandez
Secondary Curriculum Coordinator
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient

AMANDA
Martinez Balcazar

Yuma Union High
School District



"I live in a border town where there are a lot of people whose first language is Spanish. A lot of the doctors here only speak English. My whole life I have been going to dentist and doctor appointments and I see the struggles of others when they cannot understand their doctor because of a language barrier. This made me want to become a doctor because I am bilingual and I can help others in my community understand and answer their questions. My determination has brought me far and I plan to keep following my dreams. Yo soy hispana y se que yo también puedo. (I am Hispanic and I know I can do it too)."

- Amanda Martinez Balcazar
Kofa High School

"Amanda has been very successful during her school years. She has always taken responsibility for her learning and assignments by asking questions when needed, working well in groups, and completing assignments/tests on time. Apart from her classes, Amanda has been a member of many Career and Technical Education classes that help high school students gain leadership skills and knowledge to better participate in their community. It is my pleasure to recommend Amanda based on the high regard she has for her education and others she is in contact with."

- Viridiana Medina
Kofa High School

2024 Scholarship Recipient



GABRIELA
Montano

Douglas Unified
School District

“Ever since middle school I worked tirelessly to make it to the top in school, and now that I am in high school I see how all of my work has paid off. As much as I would like to say I do it for me, I don’t. I do it for my younger sister so she has someone to look up to in the future. I do it for my mother who never got the chance to go to college but look after me and my siblings. I do it for my great-grandmother who never had the chance to complete middle school since she was forced to start working. As I grew up and matured a little more I realized how fortunate I am to be Latina. Knowing how bright the future is come graduation, I will walk with my head held high thanking my ancestors for getting me where I am today as they are who have shaped me.”

- Gabriela Montano, Douglas High School

“I have known Gabriela for one year, and she has always demonstrated a drive to learn, help, and be more successful in her studies. During her years in high school, she has taken part in the Douglas High School National Honor Society, HOSA, Key Club, and Student Council, and she is a part of the varsity tennis team, reflecting her work ethic and dedication. All of these activities include a variety of volunteer, community service, and leadership skills that are useful in activities and academics, and there is no doubt that Gabriela will use this knowledge to succeed.”

*Mrs. Bobbi Morales, English Teacher
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



JAZMIN
Stein Torres

Douglas Unified
School District

“My Hispanic background has instilled in me the virtues of resilience and the capacity to discover positive qualities in every circumstance. As a result, I was able to seize opportunities and readily overcome obstacles in my life. Finding the positive aspects of situations instead of making a big deal of them is a task that my culture has taught me. This lesson set a goal for me to look forward rather than stay in the past. This goal easily opens doors to many opportunities and, at the same time, offers help to the individuals around me. I aim to teach people from different cultures that there is joy and goodness in everything, and that adopting a new perspective on life opens doors.”

- Jazmin Stein Torres, Douglas High School

“Jazmin has always demonstrated a drive to learn and be more successful in her studies. Jazmin is extremely hard-working when it comes to academics. During her years in high school, she has earned the Superintendent’s Award, and the Carson Scholar Award, attended a trip to the WWII museum, volunteered in the Paul Huber Middle School Folklorico group, been a part of the DHS National Honor Society, and is currently the DHS Band drum major; therefore, this reflects her work ethic and dedication. All of these clubs include a variety of volunteer, community service, and leadership skills, and there is no doubt that Jazmin will use this knowledge to succeed.”

*- Mrs. Bobbi Morales, English teacher
Douglas High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



BRYAN
Ucles

Phoenix Union High
School District

“My Latino heritage stems from my father who experienced what life is, from a single mother household in the poverty ridden villages of Honduras to migrating to the USA. He grew up with nothing, but the dream is to support the people he loves. Moreover, my Latino roots fuel my ambition to excel in my career as a computer engineer. I envision establishing a company where I can utilize my skills to empower others, particularly underserved communities. Through mentorship and innovative solutions, I aspire to bridge technological divides and cultivate opportunities for growth and development.”

- Bryan Ucles, Maryvale High School

“Bryan has consistently exhibited outstanding leadership skills, dedication, and a genuine passion for both basketball and personal growth. As the basketball captain for four consecutive years, he has not only demonstrated remarkable athletic abilities, but has also proven his ability to influence, empower and inspire his teammates. What sets Bryan apart is not just his athletic achievements, but also his unwavering commitment to service and concern for others. He has been actively involved in various community service initiatives, including volunteering at middle school parent nights, freshmen orientations, and distributing food boxes to those in need. Bryan’s selfless acts of service exemplify his genuine care for others and his dedication to making a positive impact in the community.”

*- Jeremy Smith, Head Basketball Coach
Maryvale High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



**MEILA
MONET**
Valenzuela

Agua Fria Union
High School District

“Although many factors shaped me as a person, growing up as a Latina has shown me a totally unique perspective that only comes from a culture of family, hard work, and determination. It's instilled the values of grit and passion while allowing me to think outside the box and push me to my limits. Knowing that the world is a better place when we give back is what drives me to work so hard to prioritize that alongside my personal goals. I'm grateful for what my culture has given me, and the morals it's shown me are priceless. I can't wait to utilize everything I've learned to make amazing things happen in my future and in my community.”

- Meila Monet, Canyon View High School

“I have worked with Meila since the Fall of 2022, but in that time I have witnessed an extraordinary young woman who is hardworking, compassionate, and intelligent. She is dedicated to pursuing a degree in business and finance. I have seen a tremendous amount of growth in Meila. I believe her caring and compassionate contribution to our campus community has not only enriched her own experience but the experience of others. Meila continually strives to put others before herself and to be of service to the world around her.”

*- Lisa Callicoat, MS
School Counselor
Canyon View High School*

2024 Scholarship Recipient



RAFAEL
Vasavilbaso Jr.

Nogales Unified
School District

“Latino heritage has had a significant impact on my desire to change the world because the United States has a GDP of 97%, whilst Mexico has only 3%. As a result, the United States earns far more than Mexico. My ambition to make a difference in the world has not stopped and will keep on growing every day. My mission and purpose is to become an entrepreneur and change the world for the better, even if it is not a widely recognized global phenomenon. It had a major effect on my purpose since, as a child, I was always concerned about people in my town who had absolutely nothing and had to scratch, claw, bite, and nearly tear themselves apart simply to make ends meet. So I believe that I can construct something that not only changes the trajectory of my life, but also improves the lives of those around me.”

- Rafael Vasavilbaso Jr.
Nogales High School

“He is intelligent, committed, and hardworking. Rafael sets high expectations for himself and will not be deterred by any obstacles. In fact, challenges propel him to strive to accomplish his goals. Additionally, Rafael’s academic achievements are impressive. He is ranked in the top 10% of his class and has a laudable grade point average. Notable work ethic, drive to succeed, and dedication make Rafael an exceptional candidate for any scholarship. I am certain that he will make the most out of any opportunity given to him. He will not let any challenges interfere with his personal and academic goals.”

- Eliza Lopez, English Department
Nogales High School

