



¡ÉXITO! Noticias

Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training

How can Latinos Help Solve Latino Health Problems?

Nicolas Lopez moved from Ecuador to the United States at age 18 to become the first of his family to try—and succeed—at higher education.

Lopez is now a master’s-degree student in public health and Latin American Studies at the University California, Los Angeles.

But he’s motivated to do more.

That’s why he and 20 other master’s-level students or health professionals joined the 3rd Annual Summer Institute of *Éxito!* Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training on June 3-7, 2013, in San Antonio.

Apply Now!
Encourage friends and colleagues to apply for *Éxito!* training and internships [here](#).

Éxito! encourages participants to pursue a doctoral degree and careers studying how cancer affects Latinos.

“The *Éxito!* program did not only motivate me to pursue a PhD, it provided me with the necessary information and tools to succeed in the world of academia,” Lopez said. “*Éxito!* helped to understand the importance and need of increasing the number of Latino doctoral students, and how we Latinos should be more involved on projects related to cancer research.”

Éxito! (English: Success!), led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio and funded by the National Cancer Institute, annually recruits master’s students and health professionals to build the field of those working to reduce Latino cancer health disparities.

Participants attend a five-day *Éxito!* summer institute that enhances understanding of: the power of research to affect change; research methods, theory and interventions; cancer control; and networking and skills to successfully apply to a doctoral program.

Participants also are eligible to apply for paid internships.

The hope is that participants go on to earn doctoral degrees and conduct novel research on why Latinos suffer worse outcomes from cancer and chronic disease.

“We believe training new Latino researchers will increase the number of Latinos in cancer control research, which will increase work being done to reduce Latino cancer,” said Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of *Éxito!* and the IHPR.



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A Message from Éxito! Principal Investigator

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez

Cancer is the No. 1 killer of Latinos. More than ever, Latino researchers are needed to uncover new ways to treat cancer or pave way for novel studies of cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic issues to prevent Latinos from suffering worse cancer outcomes.

The trouble is, there aren't enough Latino cancer researchers or doctors.

Éxito! is a Latino training program dedicated to increasing the field of Latino "insider" doctors and researchers.

In fact, several Éxito! participants already have been accepted into doctoral programs:

- Maria Brietzke – PhD in Global Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Roger Figueroa – Illinois Transdisciplinary Obesity Prevention PhD/MPH Program, University of Illinois
- Marivelisse Soto-Salgado – DrPH in Social Determinants of Health, University of Puerto Rico School of Public Health
- Mary Vanellys Diaz-Santana – PhD in Epidemiology, University of Massachusetts Amherst
- Lizette Rangel – DrPH in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences, University of Texas School of Public Health, Houston
- Laura Rubalcava – PhD in Clinical Psychology, George Washington University, DC
- Donaji Stelzig – DrPH in Health Promotion and Community Health Sciences, Texas A&M Health Science Center, School of Rural Public Health
- Becky Adeigbe – PhD in Applied Demography, University of Texas at San Antonio, School of Public Policy
- Mariana Arevalo – PhD in Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences, University of Houston, School of Public Health
- Lizbeth Del Toro-Mejias – PhD in Community Health Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, School of Public Health
- Martha Garcia – PhD in Cell and Molecular Biology, University of Texas Medical Branch, School of Biomedical Sciences
- Melawhy Garcia – PhD in Health Behavior, University of California San Diego/San Diego State University
- Loida Tamayo – PhD in Health Services, Texas A&M Health Science Center, School of Rural Public Health
- Aditi Wahi – PhD in Health Behavior, University of California San Diego/San Diego State University

It is individuals like these—and like you!—who will pursue a doctoral degree and perhaps help stop cancer—from the inside, embracing culture as a vital piece to cancer control and prevention. Contact me [here](#).



A Message from Éxito! Co-Principal Investigator

Dr. Rena J. Pasick, DrPH

As you may know, Éxito! is the offspring of the National Cancer Institute-funded training program called the Minority Training Program in Cancer Control Research (MTPCCR), which began in Northern California in 1998.

The program has been re-funded through 2014.

Learn more about the program [here](#), or take advantage of our doctoral student consultations:

What: Recognizing the challenges that arise in the course of doctoral studies, the MTPCCR has obtained funds for support services for MTPCCR and Éxito! alumni.

Financial consultation – Dr. Cherie Francis, who presented the Summer Institute session “Show me the money” for MTPCCR, is available for one-hour consultations by phone or in person (in Los Angeles). She can assist you with identification of tuition support and stipends.

Psychological consultation – Loma Flowers, MD is a psychiatrist who specializes in “emotional competence” in the course of graduate education. She presented “Stay the Course” at the MTPCCR Summer Institutes. We can support up

to two one-hour sessions with Dr. Flowers.

Academic consultation – For problems you have not been able to resolve with your institutional mentors, we are happy to try to help and are prepared to provide consultation ourselves or to identify others among our colleagues who might be helpful with your specific problem.

How: Email MTPCCR@ucsf.edu stating the category of consultation you are requesting. This will be forwarded to me, and I will review/approve the request and write to you and to the consultant to set up the consultation. You will be able to follow-up directly to set up an appointment. Following the consultation, you will be asked to complete a brief evaluation of the services so we can maintain the highest quality doctoral student support.

As always, we are here for you!





Training Opportunities

Apply for a \$3,250 *Éxito!* Internship

Éxito! alumni not currently enrolled in doctoral programs are eligible to apply for an *Éxito!* internship. Internships are designed to help *Éxito!* alumni improve their research skills. Those considering applying for an internship are required to select a mentor from their home institution or cancer research center near them and create a 6-month internship work plan. Internships will take place between June–November 2014. We encourage all of our alumni to apply!

Find out more about our internships and complete the application at <http://www.exitotraining.org/>.

Deadline for applying for one of our \$3,250 *Éxito!* Internships is March 7, 2014

Decisions will be announced in early April 2014

Share the Experience:

Encourage your friends and colleagues to apply to *Éxito!*

We are currently accepting applications for our 4th *Éxito!* Summer Institute. We encourage you to have your qualified friends and colleagues apply!

The application form can be downloaded from our website at <http://www.exitotraining.org/>.

Deadline for applications is March 7, 2014

The *Éxito!* Summer Institute will take place June 2-6, 2014

We have program brochures and flyers available on our website or in hard copies if you would like to distribute them or place them in your work and university settings. If you would like some of these resources, please e-mail us at exito@uthscsa.edu.

News from the IHPR

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, the team behind *Éxito!*, continues to investigate the causes and solutions to cancer and chronic disease disparities to improve Latino health in San Antonio, South Texas and the nation.

New IHPR cancer prevention research projects:

Redes En Acción: The National Latino Cancer Research Network

Redes En Acción is a national collective of researchers and advocates fighting Latino cancer by promoting Latino training opportunities, generating research, and supporting cancer awareness.

Breast Cancer: Testing Video-Based Clinical Trial Recruitment

This study hypothesizes that Latinas who receive an interactive, technology-infused communications intervention will increase self-efficacy and informed decision-making to enter breast cancer clinical trials.

Cervical Cancer: Educating Mothers/Daughters on the HPV Vaccine

This project trains peer educators to provide navigation support and outreach/education on cervical cancer to mothers and daughters (ages 11-17) who decide to receive the HPV vaccine in South Texas.

New IHPR cancer prevention materials:

Bilingual Cookbook: Latinas' Tasty Recipes Get Cancer-Fighting Makeover

Nuestra Cocina Saludable: Recipes from Our Community Kitchen is a new bilingual cookbook with 46 recipes to help guide families to eat healthy and help protect against cancer and other chronic diseases.

Manual: How to Provide Clinical Trials Outreach for Latinos

The Clinical Trials Outreach for Latinos (CTOL) Program Replication Manual offers tips, downloadable templates and resources, and other help to incorporate these activities in a health organization so as to increase clinical trial accrual and donation of biospecimens among Latinos.



Latino Cancer News & Articles

[New Spanish-Language Anti-Smoking Website](#)

About 5 million U.S. Latinos smoke, and lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among Latino men and second-leading cause among Latina women, according to federal data. To address this important public health issue, the NCI developed *SmokeFreeEspañol*, a website created specifically for Spanish speakers who want to quit smoking or know someone who does.

[Breast Cancer Facts and Figures, 2013-2014](#)

There was good news for Latinas in *Breast Cancer Facts and Figures, 2013-2014*, a report issued recently by the American Cancer Society (ACS). The breast cancer incidence rate for Latinas dropped during 2006-2010 (the most recent 5 years of available data) by 0.6 percent per year. However, it must be remembered that breast cancer remains the number one cause of cancer death in Latinas. And Latinas have lower rates of mammography screening than all other racial/ethnic groups.

[Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity](#)

CDC's *A Practitioner's Guide for Advancing Health Equity* is a resource for public health practitioners working to advance health equity through community health interventions. While health disparities can be addressed at multiple levels, this guide focuses on policy, systems and environmental improvements designed to improve the places where people live, learn, work and play.

[Health Disparities Intervention Research over the Past 30 Years](#)

Over the past three decades, disparities researchers have primarily focused on the patient as the target area of change rather than how to improve the health care system that services minority patients, concludes a study published in the journal *Medical Care*.

[Health Literacy and Patient Satisfaction](#)

A brief health literacy test given to patients may improve satisfaction with their care, according to a recent study reported by *Reuters Health*.

[Latinos and Uninsurance-Related Health Care Disparities](#)

Recent research published in the journal *Health Affairs* suggests that Latinos and blacks face more severe disparities than previously believed. The authors' measures indicate that compared to whites, Hispanics and blacks are more likely not only to be uninsured at any point throughout most of their lives, but also to spend more years uninsured and spend more of these uninsured years at high risk of needing medical care.

Join Our Networks and Stay Connected to All Things Latino Health

Find us online and join our networks



Redes En Acción research network for Latino cancer

Salud America! research network for Latino childhood obesity



Have you seen our **Éxito!** video?

See what alumni are saying about their experience during the **Éxito!** Summer Institute.



Éxito! Alumni 2013



Éxito! Alumni 2012



Éxito! Alumni 2011



AACR 2013



Éxito! 2013 BBQ

Aditi Wahi

Éxito! Alumni 2012

Aditi Wahi completed her MPH in May 2013 from the University of California in Irvine. She applied and was accepted to the Joint Doctoral Program in Public Health at San Diego State University and University of California, San Diego (UCSD) for the Fall 2013 school year, and she is currently enrolled and working on her PhD in health behavior. Aditi's current research interest is in coping and quality of life in cancer patients. She is currently a full-time student and will begin working with a lab at the Moores Cancer Center at UCSD.

Aditi's top career goals:

1. Work as a faculty member.
2. Become a research director for a non-profit organization.

To those considering applying to a doctoral program, Aditi has this advice:

What I have learned so far is that being in a doctoral program is not exactly how I pictured it to be. It is exhausting and overwhelming at times and I would not be able to do it if this wasn't the only thing I wanted to do. So, I guess my advice would be to be 100% sure (if possible) before applying and enrolling in a doctoral program. This can be done by working in your field, auditing or taking doctoral level courses and really thinking about what you would like to do after getting your PhD. These things will help you get a better understanding of whether or not a doctoral program is the path you want to take.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Aditi says: "Do something other than school work whenever possible! Enjoy the city you are in, take part in social outing with your classmates. Don't forget to have a life outside of school."



Aditi Wahi

Fun Facts

Anything new, fun and important to you that you would like to share?

Along with being a first-year doctoral student, I am also recently engaged and planning my wedding for next summer!

Best de-stressor?

Hiking/playing/going to the beach with my dogs!

Best study tip?

Read outside and get some fresh air.

Favorite study snack?

Nutella and strawberries!

Favorite class so far?

Behavioral measurements.

Martha Iveth Garcia *Éxito!* Alumni 2011

Martha Iveth Garcia is originally from Brownsville, Texas, and completed her bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Texas at Brownsville. She applied and was accepted to the University of Texas Medical Branch-Cell Biology Graduate Program in the Fall 2012 school year. Martha's current research interest is focused on the molecular parthenogenesis of cancer, specifically breast and ovarian cancer. She is currently a full-time student involved in research investigating the role of BRCA1 as a tumor suppressor and apoptotic regulator.

Martha's top career goals:

1. Finish her PhD.
2. Become a leading investigator in the area of cancer research.
3. Establish herself as an educator and mentor.

To those considering applying to a doctoral program, Martha has this advice:

Committing to a career in science is hard work, but if that is your dream you should do it. Every day is difficult and challenging but applying to a PhD program was one of the best decisions I ever made.

To her fellow *Éxito!* classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Martha says: "Work hard and enjoy the ride!"



Martha Iveth Garcia

Fun Facts

Anything new, fun and important to you that you would like to share?

I was able to finish my graduate school courses in one year, and my oral proposal defense is December 2013. Therefore, I will be in candidacy by January 2014. On average it takes two years to be in candidacy, so it's a huge personal feat.

Best de-stressor?

Running and exercising. After a long day in lab, I go for a run along the beach with my dog, and after that I feel amazing.

Best study tip?

Drink as much coffee as you can.

Favorite study snack?

Cheese and crackers.

Favorite class so far?

Hormonal signaling. I just love signaling pathways!



Melawhy L. Garcia

Fun Facts

Anything new, fun and important to you that you would like to share?

Most exciting news is the birth of my daughter, Victoria Elyse. After that of course is my acceptance into two doctoral programs at USC and UCSD/SDSU, and of course the start of my program at UCSD/SDSU. This has been a really great year full of exciting news and new beginnings!

Best de-stressor?

Spending quality time with my baby girl, Victoria, and my husband, Hugo.

Best study tip?

Study with a classmate. Two brains are better than one!

Favorite study snack?

Not very healthy, but ice cream sure makes studying more pleasant.

Favorite class so far?

My favorite class so far is behavioral measurement.

Melawhy L. Garcia

Éxito! Alumni 2012

Melawhy L. Garcia completed her MPH degree from California State University in 2010. She applied as was accepted to the Joint Doctoral Program in Public Health at San Diego State University (SDSU) and University of California, San Diego (UCSD) for the Fall 2013 school year, and she is currently enrolled and working on her PhD in health behavior. Melawhy's current research interests are maternal and child health, primarily focusing on obesity management and chronic disease prevention in the Latino community. She is currently a full-time student and graduate research assistant for "LUCES" (Luchando Unidos Contra el Sobrepeso), a randomized controlled trial to test the efficacy of an intervention to slow weight gain among Mexican-American children randomly sampled from a large community clinic in San Diego.

Melawhy's top career goals:

1. *Receive training in her PhD program to be better equipped to work in underserved communities, conducting valuable, culturally sensitive research and prevention programs.*
2. *Pursue a tenure-track position after completing her PhD.*
3. *Continue her focus on Latino health by seeking out research opportunities to design and implement interventions promoting behavioral change and positive health outcomes.*

To those considering applying to a doctoral program, Melawhy has this advice:

Plan ahead and be sure to set a timeline with early deadlines to allow for all the pieces of the applications to come together. She also advises individuals become familiar with the programs and faculty to really make informed decisions about which programs are the best fit.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in a doctoral programs

Melawhy says: "Develop a road map early on that allows you to plan for and accomplish milestones, including presentations, training, teaching experience, etc."



Mariana Arevalo

Mariana Arevalo Éxito! Alumni 2011

Mariana Arevalo completed her master's degree in behavioral health in 2012 from the University of South Florida. She applied and was accepted to a doctoral program at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston for the Fall 2013 school year, and she is currently enrolled and working on her PhD in behavioral sciences. Mariana's current research interest is cancer prevention and control among Hispanics/Latinos. She is currently a full-time student and graduate assistant working on a project geared to develop an injury prevention program for Latino day laborers in Houston.

Mariana's top career goals:

1. Complete her PhD.
2. Conduct Research on Latino health.
3. Get a position in academia where I can teach and do research.

To those considering applying to a doctoral program, Mariana has this advice:

Do it! The application is long and can be a bit tedious, but if you are considering a doctoral degree, please apply. We need more Hispanic/Latino investigators. I think the instrumental piece of your application is your statement of purpose, so make sure that it reflects your career goals and ambitions.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in a doctoral programs

Mariana says: "Get to know your colleagues and other students in your cohort. The first semester can be rough, so having those supporting relationships really helps you. I am lucky to have outstanding colleagues that I now call friends, and we have developed a really close network to encourage each other when we are going through difficult times in the semester. Also, determination and dedication are key!"

Fun Facts

Anything new, fun and important to you that you would like to share?

Nothing fun, all work and study.

Best de-stressor?

Friends and colleagues in your cohort. Find that person that makes you smile. Also, taking a break when you are very stressed and going for a walk outside helps me a lot!

Favorite study snack?

Almonds. Granola bars. Also get yourself a nice tea brewer!

Favorite class so far?

Theory!

Lizbeth Del Toro-Mejias

Éxito! Alumni 2012

Lizbeth Del Toro-Mejias is originally from Puerto Rico and completed her master's degree in epidemiology in May 2012 from the school of public health at the University of Puerto Rico. She applied and was accepted to the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, School of Public Health and Health Sciences for the Fall 2013 school year, and she is currently enrolled and working on her PhD in community health education. Lizbeth's current research interests are Latinos/Hispanics, sexual health, health disparities, socio-cultural disparities, teen pregnancy, and Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and HPV vaccine. She is currently a full-time student and graduate research assistant working on a federally funded project to assess a culture-centered approach to promote healthy and safer sexual behaviors among adolescent Puerto Rican Latinas living in Holyoke, Mass.

Lizbeth's top career goals:

1. Become a faculty advisor.
2. Perform her own research study.
3. Go back to Puerto Rico to work in reducing health and social disparities in her home island.

To those considering applying to a doctoral program, Lizbeth has this advice:

Just do it! Don't think about how challenging it would be or how much work you have to do in order to apply, it is worth it! And believe me, that day when you receive the good news on being accepted in a doctoral program will become one of the happiest days in your life.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in a doctoral programs

Lizbeth says: "Don't be afraid to ask! Even the smallest question could give you the key to succeed."



Lizbeth Del Toro-Mejias

Fun Facts

Anything new, fun and important to you that you would like to share?

I'm always freezing here! I think I will never get used to this cold weather. It's funny how I'm continuously tracking the temperature to do anything. Even though I can't wait to be back to Puerto Rico to spend the Christmas holidays (and to have some warm weather), I got really excited when I saw a little snow for the first time this fall. I guess it's about time.

Best de-stressor?

Sleep. I love to sleep, especially with this cold weather. So, when I feel stressed, I just take a nap to clear my mind and keep studying.

Best study tip?

If you have your desk in your room, don't study there! Your bed will always look tempting.

Favorite study snack?

Coffee! Oh well, I can't do anything without coffee!

Favorite class so far?

I love the health communication class! I'm thinking about doing a minor in communication.

Loida Tamayo

Éxito! Alumni 2011

Loida Tamayo completed her MPH degree from the School of Rural Public Health at Texas A&M University. She applied and was accepted to a doctoral program at Texas A&M University for the Fall 2013 school year, and she is currently enrolled and working on her PhD in health services research. Loida's current research interest is health disparities and minority populations. She is currently a full-time student and graduate research assistant working as part of the evaluation team for the Texas 1115 Waiver, which allows the state to expand Medicaid managed care while preserving hospital funding, provides incentive payments for health care improvements and directs more funding to hospitals that serve large numbers of uninsured patients. Loida's focus is on evaluating quality of care, its impact on population health and the cost of care.

Loida's top career goals:

1. Graduate with her PhD.
2. Obtain a federal job.
3. Develop her leadership skills.

To those considering applying to a doctoral program, Loida has this advice:

Have more confidence in yourself because you are part of a small group that understands more than you can imagine. You may not think so, but you are very coveted in the research arena.

To her fellow *Éxito!* classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Loida says: "You can do it!!!! The work is tough and the hours endless, but we can so do this!"



Loida Tamayo

Fun Facts

Anything new, fun and important to you that you would like to share?

I am beginning to align my work with my dissertation.

Best de-stressor?

Watching movies with my husband makes the day end so much better.

Best study tip?

Do not wait until the last minute to write a paper. It takes time to evolve it into a masterpiece.

Favorite study snack?

Don't snack too much! You will gain weight. But if you have to, eat carrots!

Favorite class so far?

Policy and politics in public health.



Becky Adeigbe

Becky Adeigbe *Éxito!* Alumni 2011

Becky Adeigbe is originally from Brownsville, Texas, and completed her master's degree in health and kinesiology in May 2012 from the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). She applied and was accepted into a doctoral program at the UTSA School of Public Policy for the Fall 2013 school year, and she is currently enrolled and working on her PhD in applied demography. She is currently a full-time student and program coordinator with the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, the team behind the *Éxito!* program.

Becky's top career goals:

1. Complete her PhD.
2. Pursue a career focused on population-level health and health policy.
3. Establish herself as a recognized researcher.

To those considering applying to a doctoral program, Becky has this advice:

Do your homework; become very familiar with the scope of the programs you are interested in and consider the resources and opportunities the department(s) have to offer. Being a doctoral student is only part of process, establishing yourself as a researcher and/or developing your skills to become a professor are just as important.

To her fellow *Éxito!* classmates currently enrolled in a doctoral program, Becky says: "Keep going! Those late nights and stressful moments are part of the journey."

Fun Facts

Best de-stressor?

Getting lost in the beautiful Texas Hill County.

Best study tip?

YouTube "Pink Noise," it's the best ambient noise to keep you focused!

Favorite study snack?

Caffeine keeps me going!

Favorite class so far?

Statistics for demographic data.



Mariana Ramirez *Éxito!* Alumni 2013

Mariana Ramirez is working on her master's degree in social work at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Ramirez currently works in a leadership position with the "Latinos of Tomorrow" youth development, a service-learning program led by the Greater Kansas City Hispanic Collaborative. Her research interest is breast cancer health disparities. Ramirez participated in an *Éxito!* internship because she wanted to assess medically underserved Latinas' knowledge of breast cancer screening and identify Latinas learning needs and intention to be screened.

Her research found that culturally and linguistically sensitive educational sessions (designed to enable Latinas to make an informed decision of undergoing breast cancer screening) effectively increased Latinas' knowledge of breast cancer screening; however, assimilation of new knowledge about potential risks is yet to be proved. As part of the *Éxito!* internship, Ramirez reinforced her desire to apply to a doctoral program and allowed her to develop the skills needed to manage a research study.



Starla Garcia *Éxito!* Alumni 2013

Starla Garcia is working on her master's degree in health education at the University of Houston. Garcia currently works as a graduate research assistance at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. Her current research interests are women's health issues, acculturation, family dynamics, and access to health care. Garcia participated in an *Éxito!* internship because she wanted to develop her research skills and become a more competitive doctoral program candidate. For her internship, she conducted an extensive review of the literature related to cervical cancer prevention and screening

among Latino women and those living along the Texas-Mexico border. Garcia's research identified multiple barriers to cervical cancer screening among Latinas, including lack of access to care and insurance. In addition, the most consistently successful facilitators of cervical cancer screening involve culturally sensitive patient and community education by culturally competent providers. As part of the *Éxito!* internship, Garcia increased both her understanding of cervical cancer screening among Latina women and her understanding of academic research and the types of skills needed to move forward with graduate studies.



Christina Carmona ***Éxito!* Alumni 2013**

Christina Carmona is working on her MPH degree at the University of Texas School of Public Health— San Antonio Regional Campus. Carmona currently works as a research area specialist at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. Her current research interest is cancer prevention. Carmona participated in the *Éxito!* internship because she wanted to gain writing experience and become familiar with the manuscript development

process. The aim of her internship was to develop a manuscript on the different recruitment methods and lessons learned from the Salud San Antonio! cervical cancer screening program, which is directed by IHPR researcher Dr. Cynthia Mojica. As part of the *Éxito!* internship, Carmona was able to develop her writing skills and produce a manuscript for publication. By doing so she has increased confidence in her academic writing abilities and confidence in becoming a competitive doctoral candidate.



Sanae El Ibrahimy ***Éxito!* Alumni 2013**

Sanae El Ibrahimy completed her MPH degree in December 2013 with a concentration in epidemiology and biostatistics from the School of Community Health Science at the University of Nevada. El Ibrahimy currently works as a part-time research assistant researching cancer health disparities (race and marital status and cancer risk factors such as diabetes). El Ibrahimy participated in an *Éxito!* internship because she said it was the perfect opportunity to conduct her own original research ideas. El Ibrahimy's internship aimed

to design a study to examine whether elderly diabetic Hispanics are at a greater risk for colorectal cancer, and whether having diabetes increases risk of advanced stage of diagnosis and poorer survival in patients with colorectal cancer. As part of the *Éxito!* internship, El Ibrahimy learned how to be self-motivated and have a strong sense of responsibility in following her work plan and deadlines. The internship was good training for what a researcher should expect in terms of challenges and how to overcome them.



Aleli M. Ayala Marin **Éxito! Alumni 2013**

Aleli M. Ayala Marin received her MPH degree in epidemiology from the University of Puerto Rico and is currently coordinating a pilot study, *Cultivando La Salud*, an evidenced-based educational intervention designed to increase screening test for breast and cervical cancer. Her current research interest is evaluating social behavioral interventions aimed at improving the health of Hispanics. Marin participated in the *Éxito!* internship to increase her knowledge of data analysis and interpretation, improve her statistical programming skills, improve her writing skills

and understand the submission process of a scientific article to a peer-review journal, and gain knowledge of cancer health disparities among Hispanics. In addition, Marin wanted to determine the factors associated with non-adherence of mammography between Hispanic women that have not utilized mammography screening services and those who have. Marin's research concluded that never-screened women reported significant socioeconomic disparities and personal barriers that might be affecting mammography screening practices among Puerto Rican women.



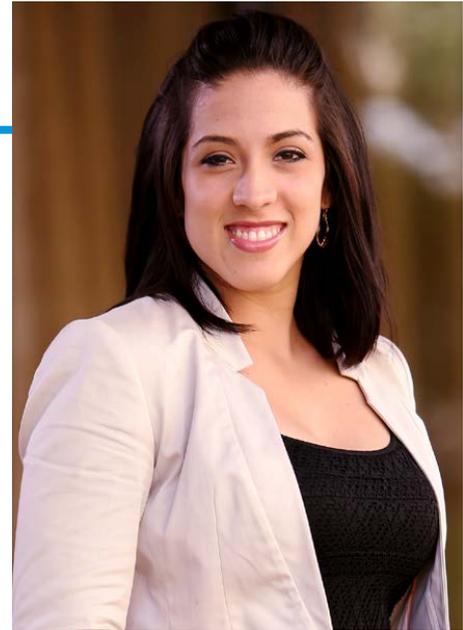
Carola T. Sanchez Diaz **Éxito! Alumni 2013**

Carola T. Sanchez Diaz is working on her MPH degree at the University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus. Sanchez Diaz currently works at the Comprehensive Cancer Center in Puerto Rico, where she recruits participants for a research project on breast cancer and metabolic syndrome. Her research interest is chronic diseases with focus in cancer and women health. Sanchez Diaz participated in the *Éxito!* internship to gain experience and tools to become a better researcher and become better prepared for a doctoral program. For her internship, Sanchez Diaz investigated the relationship between breast cancer and

metformin using a secondary database from an epidemiologic breast cancer study in Puerto Rico (Atabey). Her research observed an association between breast cancer diagnosis and Metformin, even though the observation was not statistically significant. The study supported the hypothesis that Metformin is protective for breast cancer, but the magnitude of the association and the lack of significance may have been an issue of small sample size. As part of the *Éxito!* internship, Sanchez Diaz reinforced her desire to complete her master's and she has begun applying to doctoral programs.

Margarita Chavez **Éxito! Alumni 2013**

Margarita Chavez graduated from the University of New Mexico with a master's degree in health education. Chavez current research interest is cancer health disparities among Latino women in her community. She is interested in measuring the reasons and barriers of why Hispanic women are diagnosed with breast cancer at a later stage in Albuquerque, New Mexico. For her *Éxito!* internship, Chavez assessed Hispanic women's cancer screening practices and use of healthcare in Albuquerque using qualitative methods. Chavez work determined that Latina women in the central New Mexico region identified accessibility and affordability of screening services and lack of information and healthcare system support as barriers to breast health services care. In addition, she determined that cultural and religious competency barriers existed among providers and healthcare staff.



Mari Benavidez **Éxito! Alumni 2012**

Mari Benavidez is working on her master's degree in health and kinesiology at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Benavidez currently works as a school teacher, and her research interest is childhood obesity. Benavidez participated in the *Éxito!* internship because she wanted to advance her skills so that she could eventually apply for a doctoral program. Benavidez analyzed qualitative data from a preschool-aged childhood obesity prevention program. Her research concluded that home-based obesity prevention interventions can be very beneficial and well-received by a community. In addition, as part of the *Éxito!* internship, Benavidez has determined that she would like to pursue a career in research and will be studying for her GRE and applying for doctoral programs in Fall 2014.



Janet Sanchez
Éxito! Alumni 2013

Janet Sanchez is a community health educator who helps people access and follow-through with testing for colon cancer. Sanchez, in addition to earning an MPH degree with a focus in community health education, also minored in U.S.-Mexico border health to become a more culturally competent professional. Her future education plans are to start a doctoral program in 2015. Her career goals are to obtain a doctoral degree and continue working on addressing cancer health disparities.



Alyssa De Santiago
Éxito! Alumni 2012

Alyssa De Santiago graduated with her MPH degree from the School of Community and Global Health at Claremont Graduate University in December 2012. She obtained her CHES certification in April 2013 and is currently an assessment analyst in the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness at Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona, Calif., and works as a research assistant at the YWCA San Gabriel Valley. Her top career goals are to continue to pursue higher education and develop and implement health education programming. In addition, she recently became engaged and is excited to begin the next chapter of her life.



Ramon L. Concepcion Torres
Éxito! Alumni 2012

Ramon Concepcion Torres recently collaborated with Ramon Ramirez, the Latino community leader and president of the Oregon's Farmworker Union, to address the Latino achievement gap at an early and critical stage through a parent intervention program designed to increase school readiness skills in preschool-aged children. Torres continues to gain experience in research. He hopes to become a Latino student advisor in academia and return to school in the near future.



Johana Bravo ***Éxito!* Alumni 2013**

Johana Bravo will be graduating with her MPH degree in epidemiology from the University of Kansas Medical center in December 2014. She plans on spending time increasing her professional work experience and then applying for a doctoral program. Bravo is currently a graduate research assistant at the Juntos Center for Advancing Latino Health. Her main career goal is to become an international public health consultant in epidemiology for the CDC.



David Irizarry ***Éxito!* Alumni 2011**

David Irizarry graduated with his MPH degree from the Texas A&M Health Science Center's School of Rural Public Health in McAllen, Texas, and is currently working as a director of supply chain operations. He plans on pursuing a doctorate in business administration with a concentration in health care management. His career goals are to enter into an HCA COO development program and become a member of the C-suite at a hospital.



Aixa M. Perez-Caraballo ***Éxito!* Alumni 2013**

Aixa Perez-Caraballo will be graduating with her MPH degree in epidemiology from the University of Puerto Rico School of Public Health in May 2014. She is currently applying for doctoral programs and plans on studying cancer epidemiology and cancer health disparities. Her top career goals are to obtain a doctoral degree, create HPV-related cancer disparities programs, and conduct population-based studies focused on cancer survivors. Perez-Caraballo recently created a special report on Puerto Rican cancer survivorship issues and translated her findings into a poster presentation, which she presented at a 2013 meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) in Atlanta.



Diana L. Santiago
Éxito! Alumni 2011

Diana Santiago, originally from Puerto Rico, is currently a registered nurse for a federal prison. She earned her master's degree in nursing and plans on pursuing a second master's degree in mental health.



Monica Aguilar
Éxito! Alumni 2013

Monica Aguilar graduated with her MPH degree from California State University Long Beach in May 2013. Her future education plans are to pursue a doctoral degree in maternal and child health and pursue a research career in childhood obesity. She currently works as a data manager for the CDC Cervical Cancer Mujer Sana Familia Fuerte project at the NCLR/CSULB, and as a teaching assistant in the Health Science Department at CSULB. Her top career goals are to become a research associate, obtain a DrPH, and establish a non-profit organization focused on health education for minority populations.



Wendy Ramirez
Éxito! Alumni 2013

Wendy Ramirez has a bachelor's degree in health education and is currently working on her MPH degree at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). She works as a reproductive health educator for Planned Parenthood. She recently applied for a doctoral program and hopes to become a program director and conduct child and adolescent cancer research.



Jenny Castillo
Éxito! Alumni 2012

Jenny Castillo recently completed her master's degree in health and kinesiology from the University of Texas at San Antonio and currently works as a senior quality data analyst at the University Health System in San Antonio, Texas. She plans to pursue a doctoral degree in health behaviors and become a director of a health organization. She is still dancing Flamenco and loving it!



Rosalie Aguilar
Éxito! Alumni 2011

Rosalie Aguilar is currently enrolled in the certificate in public health program at University of North Texas Health Science Center. She is in the process of applying for doctoral programs and plans to continue promoting better health among the Latino population as a research area specialist with the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. She has been working toward the publication of her first manuscript focused on the influence of antioxidants on adiposity and antioxidants moderating effects on inflammation as a result of excess levels of adiposity.



Edgar Rodriguez
Éxito! Alumni 2012

Edgar Rodriguez was recently promoted as a project coordinator focusing on disease prevention through health promotion interventions related to nutrition, physical activity, and cancer screenings. Rodriguez is currently contemplating pursuing a doctoral degree or medical school application—he said he has learned through the years that his passion is to be more of a practitioner for health rather than research. He is thrilled to announce his group recently received NIH funding to develop and implement a childhood obesity reduction intervention among Latinos in Eastern Washington.



Steven Lopez
Éxito! Alumni 2012

Steven Lopez remains interested in pursuing a doctoral degree in health policy, and has identified a few programs of interest. He is currently a senior policy analyst with the Health Policy Project at the National Council of La Raza in Washington, D.C. His work focuses on the successful implementation of the Affordable Care Act so that those eligible, particularly Latinos, maximize the full benefits of the law. In addition, he also is focusing on Latino childhood obesity, particularly the issue of childhood marketing. He said he feels blessed to be involved in work he believes in.



Edianys Velez
Éxito! Alumni 2011

Edianys Velez is in the process of applying to the DrPH program at the University of Texas School of Public health in Austin. She is currently a research consultant and hopes to continue working in the field of public health. Velez is happy to announce that her son will be turning 2 in January and they will be relocating to Austin, Texas, once her husband returns from deployment.



We want to hear from all
Éxito! Alumni!

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new in your life



About This E-Newsletter

This E-newsletter is produced annually by the *Éxito!* team, which is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR), a part of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the School of Medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Please send news items or story ideas to exito@uthscsa.edu.

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Éxito! is funded by a grant from the National Cancer Institute (1R25CA134301).