



¡ÉXITO! Noticias

Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training

Increasing Latino Participation in Solving Cancer Health Disparities

Elie Benavidez, a master's-degree student at The University of Texas at San Antonio, already is making strides to improve the lives of Latinos. She teaches elementary-school students and volunteers her time to increase local access to healthy food.

Now Benavidez, inspired by her mother's cancer battle, is considering seeking a doctoral degree and doing cancer research.

That's why she and 19 other master's-level students or health professionals joined the Institute for Health Promotion Research's second-annual Summer Institute of *Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training* on June 7-11, 2012, in San Antonio.

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

"*Éxito!* has given me so much more confidence than what I thought I had in myself, just by hearing everybody's stories and the path that they took to get where they are now," Benavidez said. "I feel like I can do anything I put my mind to."

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.

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



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A Message from *Éxito!* Principal Investigator

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez

Cancer just surpassed heart disease as 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.

The U.S. Latino population is projected to continue its sharp rise in the next few decades, and it is critical that more Latinos become doctors and cancer researchers.

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**

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 at ramirezag@uthscsa.edu.



A Message from *Éxito!* Co-Principal Investigator

Dr. Rena J. Pasick, DrPH

Greetings from the San Francisco (SF) and Los Angeles (LA) Minority Training Program in Cancer Control Research (MTPCCR). We are eagerly looking forward to 2013 in the hope that this year will bring renewal of the MTPCCR for another five years. It's been a long wait but we should know before mid-year. Please keep us in your prayers!!!

In other news, we had a fabulous joint reunion at APHA in San Francisco this past Fall. Nearly 50 *Éxito!* and MTPCCR alums came together for a fun-filled evening at a sports bar in SF—who knew it would be the last game of the World Series and the SF Giants coming out on top????!!!! This just added to the magic of the wonderful gathering in which all our alums blended together in one big happy family.

ALSO – please keep in mind that we are able to offer doctoral student support in the form of financial, academic, and psychological counseling to any and all alums who are current doctoral students. Please contact me for information: rpasick@cc.ucsf.edu.

All the best for a healthy, happy and SUCCESSFUL 2013!!!!





Training Opportunities

Apply for a \$5,000 *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-December 2013. We encourage all of our alumni to apply! Find out more about our internships and download the application from our website <http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu/exito.html>.

Deadline for applying for one of our \$5,000 *Éxito!* Internships is March 1, 2013

Decisions will be announced in early April 2013

Share the Experience:

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

We are currently accepting applications for our 3rd *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://ihpr.uthscsa.edu/exito.html>.

Deadline for applications is March 1, 2013

The *Éxito!* Summer Institute will take place June 3-7, 2013

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.

Here are a few IHPR cancer prevention initiatives currently underway:

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 HPV—the virus that causes cervical cancer—to both mothers and daughters (ages 11-17) who decide to receive the HPV vaccine in South Texas.

Survivorship: Exercise Behaviors in Latina Survivors

This project tests whether Latina cancer survivors who receive a culturally tailored exercise intervention will be more likely to initiate/maintain exercise behaviors than Latinas who do not get the intervention.

Genetic Testing for Latina Breast Cancer Risk

This study aims to understand Latinas' decisions whether to get genetic testing for breast cancer risk, which may facilitate better-informed decisions regarding cancer prevention, risk reduction, more effective early detection, and better determination of risk for family members.



Latino Cancer News & Articles

[Cancer Now Leading Cause of Death among Hispanic Americans](#)

A report from the American Cancer Society finds that more U.S. Hispanics die from cancer each year than from any other cause. In 2009, the latest year for which numbers are available, 29,935 Hispanic Americans died of cancer compared to 29,611 who died from heart disease. Heart disease was previously the leading cause of death among Hispanics, and it remains the leading cause of death among non-Hispanic whites and African-Americans.

[Faith and Masculinity: A Discussion on Raising Awareness and Promoting Cancer Screening among Latino Men](#)

Males may experience several barriers to seeking health care, including unfamiliarity with screening procedures, stigma fear and/or a perception of a breach of masculinity (machismo). This article presents trends from four community-based seminars conducted in 2010-2011. The results reported help lay out the foundation for future effective cancer screening for Latino men.

[Talking \(or Not\) About Family Health History in Families of Latino Young Adults](#)

Although individuals recognize the importance of knowing their family's health history for their own health, relatively few people (e.g., less than a third in one national survey) collect this type of information. This study examines the rates of family communication about family health history of cancer, and predictors of communication in a sample of English-speaking Latino young adults. It was determined that few Latino young adults reported collecting information from their families for the purposes of creating a family health history (18%) or sharing information about hereditary cancer risk with family members (16%). Prevention programs are needed to help further general discussions about a family's history of cancer to more specific information related to family health history.

[Colorectal Cancer Screening: Language is a Greater Barrier for Latino Men than Latino Women](#)

Colorectal cancer screening disparities between non-Latino Whites and Latinos remain high. This study examined the association between Latino race/ethnicity, gender, and English-proficiency and colorectal cancer screening. It was determined that low English-proficiency Latino men had the lowest adjusted screening rates, which were lower than all other Latinos subgroups including Latina women with low English proficiency.

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 2012 alumni
are saying about their
experience during the
Éxito! Summer Institute.



Éxito! Alumni 2012



Éxito! Alumni 2011



Éxito! Alumni, APHA Alumni Dinner, 2012, San Francisco, CA



6 Éxito! 2011, Mi Tierra Restaurant, San Antonio, TX



Éxito! 2012, Texas Pride BBQ, San Antonio, TX

Maria Brietzke

Éxito! Alumni 2011

Maria Brietzke is originally from Columbia and completed her MPH in December 2009 from the University of Texas School of Public Health in Houston. She applied and was accepted to the University of North Carolina School of Global Public Health Program for the Fall 2012 school year, and she is currently enrolled and working on her PhD in health behavior.

Maria's current research interest is in health disparities and communications-related issues in the context of immigration. She currently works as a research assistant for a project exploring the use of social networks to promote HIV screening among foreign-born Latino men in central North Carolina.

Brietzke's top-3 career goals are to:

1. *Develop a research trajectory that focuses on the role of immigration in Latino health disparities, specifically communications-related issues that arise and/or should be considered in the context of immigration.*
2. *Develop the professional and social acuity necessary to collaborate with experts and networks in the fields of immigration, health disparities and public health research in general.*
3. *Encourage and support other young Latinos interested in these fields of research.*

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

1. *Start on your statement of purpose as soon as possible and submit it for review to as many qualified people as you can (intimidating professors, friends who write well, etc.). Along those lines, plan to turn everything in 2 weeks before it's due... just in case.*
2. *Don't underestimate your application: include applications to schools you are truly drawn to (because of curriculum, faculty expertise, etc.) even if they feel beyond reach. That also goes for fellowships, scholarships, and other sources of funding. You never know!*
3. *Set some travel funds aside (or apply for funding, if you can) to tour your institutions. This can really help you make a final choice, if you're accepted to multiple schools. Once you're accepted, send thank you/update cards (or emails, at least) to everyone who's helped you get where you are. Your victories are their victories.*

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Maria says: "Let's keep in touch and share doctoral war stories! It would be great to have the social support."



Maria Brietzke

Fun Facts

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

"I'm excited to share that I'll be having a girl at the end of January 2013."

Best de-stressor?

"Long walks around the forest trail near my house. No over-thinking allowed. Just music, beautiful trees and the occasional deer."

Best study tip?

"Keep your 7 a.m.-5 p.m. 'work' hours, even on class-free days. Treat school as though it's your new job."

Favorite study snack?

"California cuties/clementines, Nutella-dipped banana slices (not very healthy, but true. Sorry!), and grapes."

Favorite class so far?

"The Global Health module of my Theoretical & Conceptual Foundations of Health Behavior class."

Maria Rangel

Éxito! Alumni 2012

Maria Rangel was born and raised in Houston, Texas. She received her MPH in Spring 2011 from the University of Texas School of Public Health in Houston (UT-SPH) and was accepted into the UT-SPH PhD in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences program for the Fall 2012 school year.

Her current research interest is in Latino health disparities, global health, and cancer and diabetes prevention. She is particularly interested in the use of performing arts as a method for health and disease prevention. Rangel is currently the research coordinator for the Sugar, Heart and Life Diabetes program and is a volunteer coordinator for the BodyGuards Volunteer program at Baylor College of Medicine.

Rangel's top-3 career goals are to:

1. Complete her PhD with a focus on diabetes and cancer prevention.
2. Work as a faculty researcher in a medical or university institution and conduct original research.
3. Develop and direct her own organization to promote healthy living for chronic disease prevention.

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

1. Look at different schools and programs.
2. Become aware of what is offered in each school and how it relates your research interest.
3. If you are not accepted into a program the first time, do not give up! Instead, improve your application and apply again.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Maria says: "Explore and refine your research interests and try to explore other research topics. Also, become active and knowledgeable in the community or population you are interested in, this will allow you to apply your research interest, and motivate you even more to become a successful public health professional."



Maria Rangel

Fun Facts

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

"I joined a Bachata dance team where I have learned the discipline of dance and working in a team environment. I am eager to find out how I can incorporate dance into my future research goals."

Best de-stressor?

"Traveling; I will be visiting various cities in central Mexico this holiday break."

Best study tip?

"Take running or dancing breaks."

Favorite study snack?

"Grapes and M&Ms."

Favorite class so far?

"The Global Health module of my Theoretical & Conceptual Foundations of Health Behavior class."



Roger Figueroa

Roger Figueroa Éxito! Alumni 2012

Roger Figueroa was born and raised in Puerto Rico and received his master's in health and kinesiology from the University of Texas at San Antonio in Fall 2012. He applied and was accepted into the to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Transdisciplinary Obesity Prevention MPH/PhD program for the Fall 2012 school year.

His current research interest is in media-related intervention strategies for obesity prevention among minorities, specifically Latinos. He also has a strong interest in studying physical activity effects on obesity and would like to transition into investigating the relationships between physical activity and body-fat composition later in his career.

Figueroa is currently a research assistant for the UP AMIGOS project, for which he oversees the data entry and laboratory activities. This project is a multidisciplinary investigation of the relationship between genetics, obesity and the social environment.

Figueroa's top 3 career goals are to:

1. Complete his doctoral degree.
2. Pursue a tenure-track position in academia.
3. Conduct research and implement programs promoting healthy lifestyles for underserved and minority populations.

Fun Facts

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

"It is super cold and windy in Chicago! I think everyone sees me as the weird guy who wears the most clothes/layers and hats."

Best de-stressor?

"Exercising and cooking."

Best study tip?

"Have a study plan or outline before getting started that way you know how much needs to get done and you give yourself a timeline."

Favorite study snack?

"Oatmeal and Dark Chocolate soft-baked cookies from Kashi."

Favorite class so far?

"Biostatistics."



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

Be perseverant and patient; it takes time and effort but it is totally worth it even though it may seem like a big step, hard, or time consuming.

He has this quote for his fellow Éxito!

Alumni: "Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway." Just keep going, have the openness to continue learning and great things will happen.

To his fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Roger says: "Always look for resources on and off campus; sometimes we have access to information and/or activities that might give us a better understanding of coursework topics, research, etc. Don't forget about your social life! Meet people, distract yourself a little but don't over-enjoy yourself; school is your top priority!"



Laura Rubalcava

Fun Facts

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

"I am still salsa dancing and ran my fourth half marathon this year! Also, I love my job!"

Best de-stressor?

"Dancing salsa."

Best study tip?

"Download and use the focus booster app!"

Favorite study snack?

"Apples with peanut butter."

Favorite class so far?

"Biological Bases of Behavior."

Laura Rubalcava Éxito! Alumni 2011

Laura Rubalcava is originally from San Antonio, Texas. She received her master's in psychology from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She began her doctorate in clinical psychology from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology in August 2011.

Her research interest is in clinical health psychology, mindfulness-based interventions, neuropsychology and positive psychology. She is currently a pre-doctoral clinical psychology extern and neuropsychology psychometrist and was recently nominated as a fellow for the Preparing Future Psychology Faculty Program designed to enhance the pipeline of minority psychology doctoral students and early-career faculty for successful careers in the psychology profession.

Rubalcava is interested in the psychosocial factors of obesity and the relationships between these factors and successful bariatric surgery outcomes in diverse patient samples.

Rubalcava's top-3 career goals are to:

1. Become a psychology professor and have her own private practice working with diverse populations.
2. Be a consultant to bariatric surgeons, conducting pre-surgical evaluations and post-op support groups.
3. Lecture on psychological aspects of obesity, underserved populations (especially Latinos), and norming neuropsychology assessments to the Latino population.

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

1. Prepare early- GRE prep classes, build relationships with mentors, and do internships that are in line with your future goals.
2. Understand how you learn (i.e., auditory, haptic or visual). Learn about your strengths and weaknesses as a student.

To her fellow **Éxito!** classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, **Laura has this advice:** "Create a strong support system of friends, family and colleagues and be sure to create a plan for self-care. Basically, know what activities you like to do and make sure you include them in everyday life. This can start now."



Mary V. Diaz Santana Éxito! Alumni 2011

Mary Diaz Santana was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She received her MPH epidemiology from the University of Puerto Rico. She was accepted into the PhD in Epidemiology program at the University of Massachusetts Graduate School of Public Health for the fall 2012 school year.

Mary's current research interest is in cancer epidemiology, specifically breast cancer and Latino cancer health disparities research. She is currently a project assistant and statistical consultant in her PhD program.

Her main research goals are to complete her PhD and become an independent researcher.

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

Based on your interest, look for opportunities offered by different universities and always strive to achieve your goals; the sky is the limit!

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Mary says: "Be tenacious and continue working until you fulfill your goals!"

Mary also participated in the Éxito! internship program, for which she assessed differences in the association between risk factors for molecular subtypes of breast cancer to determine the prevalence among females with breast cancer in Puerto Rico.

Being a part of this internship, she had the opportunity to improve her research and statistical skills and establish relationship with researchers in her field of interest.



Mary V. Diaz Santana

Fun Facts

Best de-stressor?

"Playing basketball"

Best study tip?

"Time management; make the most of every second."

Favorite study snack?

"Yogurt."

Favorite class so far?

"Epidemiology"



Marivelisse Soto-Salgado

Éxito! Alumni 2011

Marivelisse Soto-Salgado was born, raised and currently lives in Puerto Rico. She received her MPH from the University of Puerto Rico. She is currently a doctoral student at the University of Puerto Rico Graduate School of Public Health, where she is working on her DrPH in social determinants of health.

Her current research interest is focused in Latino health disparities and understanding the personal and socio-cultural factors influencing the burden of cancer. Since 2008, Marivelisse has been part of the research team for the Puerto Rico Cancer Center/MD Anderson Cancer Center Partnership. As part of this project, she serves as coordinator of the Biostatistics/Bioinformatics Core (BBC), for which she provides statistical support and consultation for all cancer research projects involved in this partnership.

Soto-Salgado's top-3 career goals are to:

1. Pursue a DrPH in social determinants of health.
2. Increase her knowledge of cancer prevention and control and larger health disparities in minority populations.
3. Acquire further skills in advanced statistical techniques and publications.

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

1. Have strong research and work experience prior to applying to a doctoral program. Both experiences will help you to gain significant skills and professional maturity to define your goals.
2. Apply to all possible internships and fellowship opportunities in your research area of interest.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates enrolled in doctoral programs, Marivelisse says: "Be organized! Especially if you work full time and study at night! It's important to have a balance between work, school, and family ... I'm still in that process!"



Marivelisse Soto-Salgado

Fun Facts

Anything new, fun and – most importantly – important to you that you would like to share?
"It is so hard to find time to exercise! I am trying to work it in to my routine. Any tips?!"

Best study tip?
"Be organized, read every day, go over your notes before class, limit Facebook time!!"

Favorite study snack?
"Candies, candies and more candies."



Cynthia Wittenburg

Cynthia Wittenburg **Éxito! Alumni 2011**

Cynthia Wittenburg was born and raised in El Paso, Texas. Cynthia received her master's in community health education and behavioral health from the University of New Mexico. She returned to Texas to pursue a career in pediatric oncology research. Wittenburg is currently enrolled in the DrPH program at the University of Texas School of Public Health in El Paso.

Wittenburg is currently a senior clinical research project coordinator at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHDR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio and just completed a clinical trial recruitment study for minority pediatric cancer survivors.

Wittenburg's top-3 career goals are to:

1. Pursue a DrPH in social determinants of health.
2. Increase her knowledge of cancer prevention and control and larger health disparities in minority populations.
3. Acquire further skills in advanced statistical techniques and publications.

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

If you are serious about obtaining a doctoral degree, first apply to Éxito!, it will provide you with the necessary tools to guide you in the right path and avoid wasting time and money.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates currently enrolled in a doctoral program, Cynthia says: "Persistence and determination makes dreams come true. It's not easy, but it is doable. Keep going!"

Fun Facts

Best de-stressor?

"Working out and hiking with family."

Best study tip?

"Do not wait until the last minute to get assignments completed."

Favorite study snack?

"Edame...you can eat as many as you want and not feel guilty!"

Favorite class so far?

"Government in Public Health."



Donaji Stelzig

Fun Facts

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

“Since starting my doctoral program, I have many new, intelligent, diverse friends from all over the world!”

Best de-stressor?

“Completing assignments!”

Best study tip?

“Just sit down and do it!”

Favorite study snack?

“Water!!”

Favorite class so far?

“All of them have been wonderful experiences! It is so nice to be a student again!!”

Donaji Stelzig Éxito! Alumni 2011

Donaji Stelzig received her master’s from the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston in May 2004. She is currently enrolled in the DrPH in Health Promotion and Community Health Sciences program at the Texas A&M Health Science Center - School of Rural Public Health.

Stelzig is currently a health educator, and her current research interest is in cancer prevention and underserved population health issues.

Stelzig’s top-3 career goals are to:

1. Provide help and counseling to underserved individuals.
2. Reduce health inequities.
3. Educate and empower individuals to reduce their risk for chronic diseases.

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

It is important to be committed to studying. If you are working full time, plan and communicate your educational plans with your employer. Keep an open line of communication with family and friends to create a support group when you are feeling overwhelmed.

To her fellow Éxito! classmates currently enrolled in a doctoral program, Donaji says: “Doctoral programs require extensive reading, REMEMBER to exercise!”



Aditi Wahi ***Éxito!* Alumni 2012**

Aditi Wahi currently lives in Irvine, Calif., and will be completing her master's in the Spring of 2013 from University of California, Irvine (UCI). Her future educational plans are to pursue a doctoral degree in health behaviors.

Wahi's top career goal is become a researcher/director of a public health program at a non-profit or university. She is currently interested in investigating health disparities among pediatric oncology patients.

Wahi is currently a student and part-time research associate at UCI and is researching pain and anxiety among pediatric oncology patients.

Wahi participated in an *Éxito!* internship to provide her with a foundation to create a manuscript with the data she collected as part of the Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC) project she is associated with. For her internship, Wahi investigated the health-related quality of life in pediatric oncology patients.

Her work concluded that there is a relationship between ethnicity and lower quality of life scores among pediatric oncology patients. Parental anxiety was found to mediate this relationship.

What did Wahi take away from her *Éxito!* internship experience? Improved confidence in her data analysis and writing skills, which she knows will be helpful in graduate school and her future career.



Alyssa De Santiago ***Éxito!* Alumni 2012**

Alyssa De Santiago was born and raised in California and is a current graduate from the Claremont Graduate University School of Community and Global Health MPH program. Her future educational goal is to begin a public health doctoral program in the next five years.

Her current career goals are to obtain her Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) certification and continue exploring her research interest in health disparities with a focus on obesity prevention.

De Santiago is a research assistant at the YWCA in San Gabriel Valley and is participating in collecting and analyzing data for their program initiatives.

De Santiago participated in an *Éxito!* internship to take leadership in the development of a health disparities report for San Gabriel Valley, Calif. Her assessment determined disparities did exist among different ethnic and socioeconomic regions of San Gabriel Valley with the most disparities seen among Latinos.

Participating in the *Éxito!* internship allowed De Santiago to experience the realities of conducting research and gained time management, group collaboration and data analysis skills critical for a career in research.





Lizbeth Del Toro

Éxito! Alumni 2012

Lizbeth Del Toro was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She completed her master's in epidemiology from University of Puerto Rico in the summer of 2012. Her future educational plans are to pursue a doctoral degree in health behavior research.

Del Toro's career goals are to become a university faculty member and serve as a principal investigator involved in epidemiological studies and cancer prevention and control research.

She currently works as a project coordinator and is currently conducting her NCI diversity supplement research identifying parents' knowledge and attitude toward the HPV vaccine among male adolescents in Puerto Rico.

Del Toro participated in an *Éxito!* internship to develop her skills as an epidemiologist and have an opportunity to lead her own research. The aim of Del Toro's internship was to evaluate the

association between male circumcision and genital HPV among men attending a sexually transmitted infection clinic in Puerto Rico. Del Toro's research concluded there was not an association between the protective effect of circumcision and genital HPV infection.

As part of the *Éxito!* internship, Del Toro reinforced her statistical skills, management of databases and time management skills.



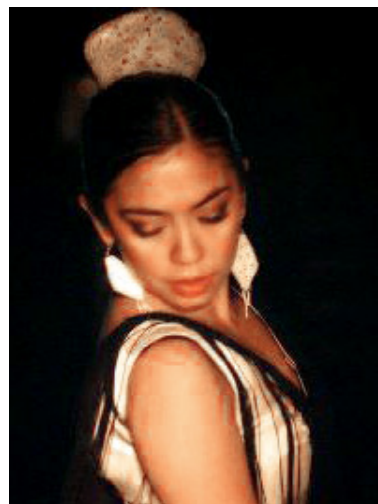
Jenny Castillo

Éxito! Alumni 2012

Jenny Castillo was born and raised in San Antonio, Texas. She is currently pursuing her master's in health and kinesiology from the University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA). Her future educational plans are to obtain a doctoral degree in public health with a focus in health behaviors.

Castillo's top career goals are to create, promote and teach public health education programs for Latino families, obtain her Certified Health Education Specialist (CHES) certification and ultimately obtain a doctorate. Castillo's broad research interest is in the social determinants of health among Latinos with a special focus in community empowerment and obesity prevention.

Castillo is currently a supplemental instructor in the health and kinesiology department at UTSA and is working on her thesis, which is exploring built environment factors related to Latina youth engagement in physical activity in low-income communities in San Antonio.



Castillo's participation in the *Éxito!* internship complimented her thesis work, such as providing resources for exploring the literature and conducting the qualitative analysis. Participating in this internship, she learned interpersonal skills working with different individuals in research settings and processes associated with conducting research in university institutions.



Delana Gonzales ***Éxito!* Alumni 2012**

Delana Gonzales is originally from New Mexico and moved to San Antonio to pursue her MPH from the University of Texas School of Public Health in San Antonio (UT-SPH). She is scheduled to graduate in December 2013. Gonzales' future educational plans are to pursue a PhD in health education and promotion.

Working with students is very rewarding for Gonzales, and her ultimate career goal is to become a dean or president of a university. She is currently a graduate research assistant UT-SPH and is interested in Latino cancer health disparities, specifically breast cancer, in San Antonio communities. She also is currently a fellow on a Susan G. Komen for the Cure post-baccalaureate training program offered through UT-SPH.

As part of Gonzales' internship, she served as a member of the *Salud San Antonio!* research program focused on educating Latinas

on breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening practices. As part of this project, she collaborated with community partners and organizations and assisted in the recruitment and education of participants.



Gonzales' internship gave her the opportunity to explore how cancer control research aids in finding solutions to the cancer health disparities present in minority populations.



Becky Adeigbe ***Éxito!* Alumni 2011**

Becky Adeigbe was born in South Texas and moved to San Antonio to pursue higher education. She received her master's in health and kinesiology from the University of Texas at San Antonio in spring 2012. Her educational plans are to obtain a DrPH in leadership.

Adeigbe's top career goal is to continue her career in public health and become a recognized researcher in the field of physical activity and health promotion to reduce chronic disease and cancer among underserved and minority populations.

Adeigbe is currently a project coordinator at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, where she coordinates the *Salud America! Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children* and the *Éxito!* programs.

Adeigbe participated in the *Éxito!* internship to continue developing her statistical analysis skills and learn more about data management. Adeigbe's internship investigated the relationships between Latino physical activity behaviors and cancer screening practices, and their beliefs about cancer prevention. It was determined that physically active Latinos were more likely to adhere to cancer screening recommendations and had more positive beliefs toward cancer prevention than less active Latinos.



Helen Palomino **Éxito! Alumni 2012**

Helen Palomino earned her master's in social work from San Diego State University in 2008. She currently works as a medical social worker at the Cancer Resource Center of the Desert, a nonprofit organization in California.

Palomino's *Éxito!* internship focused on evaluating demographic and cancer characteristics among patients living in a rural, medically underserved community (Imperial County) and identifying financial and other social factor barriers to cancer care faced by this community. She determined that higher incidences of breast and blood cancer diagnosis existed, and socioeconomic, acculturation and citizenship were significant barriers to cancer care.

Palomino's internship helped expose her to the benefits and challenges of collaborative work between research institutions and public organizations. The internship allowed her to strengthen her statistical analysis skills and gain further understanding of the cancer health disparities faced in Imperial County.



Cristina Valdovinos **Éxito! Alumni 2012**

Cristina Valdovinos is originally from California but is working on her MPH at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health. Valdovino is currently a research assistant and is examining the behavioral factors of breast cancer survivors using the New York Metropolitan breast cancer registry data.

Valdovinos' *Éxito!* internship focused on determining whether perceived discrimination was associated with Latinos' adherence to breast, cervical, colorectal and prostate cancer screening testing. It was determined that screening behaviors among Latino men and women were different among age groups and type of screening test. Lack of health insurance and acculturation to U.S. culture were predictors of low cancer screening adherence, and individuals with higher perceived levels of discrimination were less likely to adhere to screening recommendations.

Valdovinos' internship allowed her to improve her statistical analysis skills and work with complex data sets. She learned the importance of effective communication when working closely with large research teams.



Ramon Concepcion Torres **Éxito! Alumni 2012**

Ramon Concepcion Torres is a native of Puerto Rico. Ramon moved to the U.S. and earned his master's in demography from Bringhamton University.

He has currently relocated from the east coast to the west coast (Oregon, WA) and established plans to continue his doctoral degree. His goals are to obtain career and financial stability to help his family.



Fun Facts

Ramon's move to the west coast has been his dream for some time now. He is enjoying the new scenery and everything the west coast has to offer.



Rosalie Aguilar **Éxito! Alumni 2011**

Rosalie Aguilar, a native of Texas, obtained her master's degree in health and kinesiology from the University of Texas at San Antonio in May 2012. She is currently enrolled in a Public Health Certificate Program at the University of North Texas and, upon completion of the certificate program, plans to pursue a DrPH. Aguilar is currently a content curator for the *Salud America!* Latino childhood obesity research project, a national project based at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHDR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. Aguilar's career goals are to work in an environment that continuously challenges her abilities and allows for work toward the reduction of Latino health disparities, as well as pursue opportunities related to cancer control research.

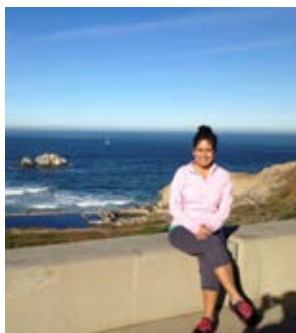
Fun Facts

Aguilar had the opportunity to attend the 2012 American Public Health Association (APHA) meeting in San Francisco and interact with other students and public health professionals. The entire experience was very inspirational and encouraging for Aguilar.



Marina Daldalian **Éxito! Alumni 2011**

Marina Daldalian completed her MPH in May 2012. She is currently enrolled in Stanford University's Chronic Disease Self Management Program (CDSMP), and is being trained to facilitate those groups. Although Marina has a career as a strategic analyst, she plans on pursuing a PHD in a field that is exciting for her. Daldalian's career goals are to engage in a career she is passionate about, serve as a teacher in some capacity and inspire minority students to pursue higher education, and travel to discover advancements from around the world she can use to heal her own communities.



Fun Facts

Daldalian has taken up yoga as a form of exercise and relaxation. She is becoming more advanced in her yoga techniques and can now incorporate handstands in her yoga routine.



Edgar Rodriguez
Éxito! Alumni 2012

Edgar Rodriguez completed his MPH degree in May 2011 from San Diego State University. Rodriguez is currently a program coordinator at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and is considering pursuing a doctoral degree. His career goals are to continue working with people through a career in public health and pursue a doctoral degree that will allow him to focus on environmental health issues, physical activity and/or obesity prevention.

Fun Facts

Rodriguez has taken up coaching and currently serves as a soccer coach for an after-school program funded by the U.S. Soccer Foundation.



Rossybelle Perales
Éxito! Alumni 2012

Rossybelle Perales is currently working on her master's degree and is a program manager at the University of Texas School of Public Health in Houston. Perales plans to begin taking graduate courses in the Fall 2013 semester. Her career goals are to obtain a doctoral degree, work in the field of cancer control research, and ultimately start a career at the National Cancer Institute.

Fun Facts

After attending the *Éxito!* Summer Institute in June 2012, Rossybelle became engaged. She is now planning a Spring 2013 wedding.



Mariana Arevalo
Éxito! Alumni 2011

Mariana Arevalo completed her master's degree in August 2012 and is currently a research coordinator for a cancer health disparities study. Her career goals are to obtain a doctoral degree, secure a post-doctoral fellowship and obtain a research position at a cancer center/research institution to help improve Latino cancer health outcomes.

Fun Facts

Mariana is enjoying opportunities to partake in new research and present the findings.



We want to hear from all
Éxito! Alumni!

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and keep us informed of anything
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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