



IDEAL SCHOLARS FUND SELECTS 12 AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINO STUDENTS FOR SCHOLARSHIPS TO U.C. BERKELEY

In the face of discouraging recent news about the declining acceptance rates of African American and Latino students at the University of California at Berkeley, the Initiative for Diversity in Education and Leadership – also known as the IDEAL Scholars Fund – has selected 12 new scholars, all of whom will enroll at UC Berkeley for the 2004-05 academic year.

IDEAL (www.idealscholars.org) invests in high-caliber underrepresented students by providing resources and support to maximize their opportunities in college and beyond. IDEAL scholars receive four-year scholarships, access to tutors, laptops, summer internships, leadership training, and mentors. They are selected because of their outstanding self-initiative, community orientation, leadership capabilities and academic potential. The new cohort of participants will join the 20 current scholars, who range from first-year students to juniors.

The new scholars are:

Chantelle Brown, East Palo Alto, Eastside College Preparatory School
Mayra Canizales, Hayward, Hayward High School
Davíd Cruz, East Palo Alto, Menlo-Atherton High School
José Cardenas, San Jose, William C. Overfelt High School
Luz Gonzales, Gilroy, Gilroy High School
Arthur Jackson, Oakland, McClymonds High School
Diego Kusnir, Berkeley, Berkeley High School
Chad-Eric Montgomery, Hercules, El Cerrito High School
Julieta Murillo, San Jose, Pioneer High School
Uriridiakoghene Onovakpuri, San Francisco, San Lorenzo High School
Gustavo Orozco, Richmond, Richmond High School
William Pomart, San Leandro, San Lorenzo High School

“These students have earned admittance into UC Berkeley, the nation’s top public institution, because of their stellar academic records and potential to benefit the university community. IDEAL seeks to ensure their enrollment and success, and we are delighted to welcome the new scholars,” said Cedric Brown, the director of IDEAL.

IDEAL is a program of the Level Playing Field Institute (www.lpfi.org) and was established in 2001 to increase the number of underrepresented students who enroll in, and graduate from, top colleges. IDEAL encourages diversity in the student body and fosters a new generation of leaders. As a result, communities and workplaces benefit from well-prepared, competitive leaders representing broad perspectives and sectors of society.

Cedric Brown
Director, IDEAL Scholars Fund
Tel: 415-946-3023 Direct
cbrown@lpfi.org
www.idealscholars.org

2004 IDEAL Scholars – In Their Own Words
Excerpts from Scholars’ U.C. application essays

Chantelle Brown, *East Palo Alto, Eastside College Preparatory School.*

“Through basketball I have had the opportunity to travel to different cities and states, and meet people who otherwise I would have never had the chance to meet. At basketball camps, my team is always the only black team. The other teams often stare at us and laugh. Though this sometimes hurt me, I never let it stop me from making sure that they got to know me. After engaging in conversation with other teams, I learned these people grew up in an entirely different environment than I did. Yet, these things did not upset me or ignite a flame of jealousy. Rather these differences made me want to embrace my life even more. I realized that if everyone was the same, then the words ‘different’ and ‘unique’ would not exist.”

Chantelle is interested in majoring in African American Studies or Social Sciences.

Mayra Canizales, *Hayward, Hayward High School.*

“Working at La Familia Counseling Service has exposed me to community work and leadership development projects that help me not only identify obstacles faced by the Latino community, but also develop and implement solutions that aim to alleviate the targeted problem. When I first began tutoring at Winton Middle School, I realized that despite the fact that Winton was 60% Latino, there were no established programs aiming to promote cultural awareness and academic achievement for Latino students. As a promoter of social justice and a former Winton student, I believed it was my obligation to make a change and started a Latina Club. By helping Latinas understand who they are both culturally and individually, I am helping to achieve social justice within the educational system.”

Mayra is interested in social sciences or education.

David Cruz, *East Palo Alto, Menlo-Atherton High School.*

“Stomping my little feet in marches against Proposition 187 protecting immigrant rights as a five year old, I had no idea that ten years later I would return to the movement for social change. This knowledge hit me at an environmental justice workshop I attended last year, sparking a blaze that singed holes through the veil that covered my eyes. Through youth organizing, I found out what true environmental racism meant and our power to challenge it as young people of color. Along with other youth, we took a radical approach of advocating for our community to decide its own destiny through organizing community forums, knowing that self-determination drives us closer to our desires.”

David is interested in social sciences or the humanities.

José Cardenas, *San Jose, William C. Overfelt High School.*

“I had many responsibilities at an early age that I had to fulfill. I have had a job for almost all my high school career. It is tough having to balance everything out and still be able to keep up. I am determined to go to college and be someone that my whole family can look at and be proud of. I want my parents to know that their years of work and struggles did not go to waste and in turn helped me get to where I am today.”

José is interested in the health sciences or biology.

Luz Gonzalez, *Gilroy, Gilroy High School.*

“Passion has been defined to be a powerful feeling and a deep love by many sages, but I personally don’t think that this begins to describe the passion that gymnastics inspires in me. Is it possible that he who came up with this definition knew what it was like to be in love for fourteen years? I bet that he has never felt the urge to do split leaps down an empty hallway, and that he has never walked on his hands around the house for hours, the breathlessness that follows the end of a floor routine, the happiness of knowing that you’ve done the right thing, or the deep disappointment that comes when you don’t perform your best. This passion that I feel for gymnastics is how I compare my passion for learning.”

Luz is interested in Political Science.

Arthur Jackson, Oakland, McClymonds High School.

“My community has played a vital role in my success. Everyday my environment is a reminder of how important it is for me to excel. Unfortunately, my entire community doesn’t share my aspirations. Several desire to be drug dealers, thieves, and gang-bangers. The foundation we’ve stood on has guided us to be under-achievers. I altered that ludicrous path in order to improve my future. When I succeed, I want to help other people climb to the top and set new standards.”

Arthur is interested in education.

Diego Kusnir, Berkeley, Berkeley High School.

“As part of a first generation immigrant family I have a somewhat unique perspective on US government and culture. I speak Spanish at home and I visit my extended family every year in Mexico. At the same time, I am born and bred American; I love American music, clothes, and all the different types of people. I always feel I can take a step back and view the culture of other places from a distance. My family values traveling a lot so I had the opportunity to visit many places and develop a different perspective on US international and domestic policies. These experiences, combined with my vision problem, have given me awareness and potential to contribute on issues involving culture, immigration, disabilities, and international policies.”

Diego is interested in liberal arts and humanities.

Chad-Eric Montgomery, Hercules, El Cerrito High School.

“For the past three years, I have been the president of the Sigma Beta Club. This is a college Awareness program that focuses on building leadership and character of young African American males. Participating in the Sigma Beta Club has allowed me to travel, to meet youth throughout the country who are working towards the same goals, and to work with adults who have been where I am headed. It has all come together to make me more respectful of the differences between people, regardless of their age, race, sex or religion.”

Chad is interested in engineering.

Julieta Murillo, San Jose, Pioneer High School.

“Building robots and cracking physics may not seem interesting for everyone, but these are essential pieces of my dream. My experience in robotics has brought open an engineering interest. Meanwhile, physics class served to broaden my knowledge of the physical world. I dream about graduate work on the Ph.D. level. Migrating from another country was difficult for me. Despite my language barrier and many ESL classes, I was able to overcome my hardships. I am hopeful for the future and realize the challenge will be hard; however I remain optimistic and willing to step forward. Perhaps I will one day be building a space shuttle. Hey, why not?”

Julieta is interested in chemical engineering.

Uriridiakoghene Onovakpuri, *San Francisco, 2003 graduate of San Lorenzo High School.*

“ ‘Memories are wonderful; to me they are what keep you alive...You believe because you know that once upon a time you were in a place where you were loved by all.’ The above is a quote from my journal. In fourth grade when I started to write it was a release. Writing gave me freedom; in my poetry I could weave in the memories of the happy times in our family. Today I still write to escape if just for a moment from the chaos of the world. However now my writing has expanded beyond poetry and found its outlet in other things such as satirical essays and short stories. Although the format of my writing may change, the feeling that I have when I write, and what I want to convey to my readers will not. I want to be able to reach out to bigger places and remember better times, all through the written word.”

Uriri is interested in English and creative writing.

Gustavo Orozco, *Richmond, Richmond High School.*

“Ever since I was in elementary school, I have been curious about math and the laws of science. I always wanted to work in a laboratory or in a place where I was able to engineer new things. In the summer of 2003, I was selected to participate in a nine-week internship at NASA. With enthusiasm, I would get up at 5:30- every morning to go on a two-hour ride to the NASA Center in Mountain View in order to complete an eight-hour programming class. I am already looking for research opportunities at Lawrence Berkeley Lab because I feel that now I have more qualities to be a researcher for a University faculty member. After last summer, I realize I have a high level of motivation to attend college.”

Gustavo is interested in physics.

William Pomart, *San Lorenzo High School, San Leandro.*

“As a peer tutor at school, I try to answer all the questions other students have in their homework. Recently, I have even gone over the barrier of language by explaining homework questions to students who are not fluent in English. After helping many students, I realized the importance of increasing attendance to such a program. My goal is to encourage students, and through incentives, help them build skills that will help them for the rest of their lives.”

William is interested in biochemistry and molecular and cell biology.