

I am Jennifer Liberto, a 17-year old graduating senior from San Pasqual High School. My academic goal is to become a Molecular Biologist specializing in genetic research. It is a passion of mine because each day my identical twin sister and I live with a known genetic variant called methylenetetrahydrofolate (MTHFR) that impairs our ability to process folate and can lead to blood clots. I want to study genetic variants such as MTHFR and to discover treatments for such defects.

I have had three wonderful science teachers who have inspired my career choice. My mentors have been: Mrs. Nordeen in eighth grade who introduced me to general science and the scientific community; Mrs. Johanson in ninth grade who introduced me to the fascinating world of scientific research; and Mrs. Hamilton in tenth and twelfth grades who made molecular science incredibly exciting and who also provided many learning opportunities in local scientific labs and research centers.

This week, I was admitted to my first choice school, the University of California at Merced, where I will study cell biology; my plans are to graduate in 2014 with a BS degree and then pursue my studies at the graduate level. UCM has excellent cell biology and nanotechnology programs. One of my big hurdles is financing the cost of my education. I am from a single-parent family and my mom recently suffered a permanent disabling back injury; due to Mom's injury our family lost our income, college savings, and childhood home. Because education is important in our home, (my twin sister and I will be the first to graduate from a four-year university), I have applied to scholarships to help with the cost of college attendance.

Your scholarship would help me achieve my goal of helping others with genetic variants live healthier lives.