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## Scholarships help make pre-med studies a reality for Miami student

Leilani Chirino believes that education is the way to a better life.

The pre-med student at Florida International University in Miami graduated from high school with enough Advanced Placement credits to start at the university as a sophomore. During her high-school-senior year, she took eight AP classes while applying for more than 30 scholarships.

She was awarded about half of the scholarships — including a Horatio Alger Award, a USA Funds Access to Education Scholarships® award and a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship, which paid her tuition. Without the scholarships and a Pell Grant to cover her lab fees, Chirino says she probably would not be in college.

When Chirino was 2 years old, her mother was in a car accident that left her in a coma for three years. Her grandmother raised Chirino and cared for Chirino's mother, who now is disabled.

"I practically grew up in a hospital," Chirino says. "That's probably why I want to go into medicine."

Over the years she's witnessed 13 surgeries performed on her mother, including an experimental transplant. Chirino has dreams of being a pediatric trauma surgeon. She loves children and views the human body as a machine, with the physician as the mechanic.

At Florida International University, she's enrolled in the Honors College, and she will attend the University of South Florida College of Medicine in Tampa.

"A lot of people say they can't afford college," she says. "There's really no excuse. There are scholarships galore out there."



*Leilani Chirino*