

# Hispanic students conclude DOE summer internships

Since 1990, the Department of Energy Office of Environmental Management has provided more than \$1.9 million in scholarships to academically accomplished Hispanic students studying disciplines related to EM's mission. EM and other DOE organizations are supporting the program, and DOE support of Hispanic students through fiscal year 2005 is expected to total more than \$2.7 million.

Last year, Jessie Roberson, assistant secretary for Environmental Management, announced a new internship program that would build on DOE's support of Hispanic education and address the challenges of EM's Human Capital Management Program. The internships give former EM scholarship recipients "hands-on" experience working for DOE. The program was implemented this past July, and DOE-RL received four interns.

Martin Garibay has worked odd jobs since he was 13, so he had already developed a strong work ethic before he attended East Los Angeles Community College. He wanted to go to a four-year university, but "because of my parents' and my lack of resources, I had few options available," he said.

"It was not until I attended college that I realized, if I wanted to pursue my goal of a degree in mechanical engineering, I would have to work more hours to pay for the expenses that come with a higher education," Garibay said.

While in community college, Garibay worked 29 hours a week during the school year at a restoration shop for classic cars. He also wrestled for the school team and was president of the student chapter of the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers. Last summer he interned at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, and this summer he worked at DOE-RL. He's now back in school at the University of California at Irvine, working toward a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering.

Jacob Torres grew up in a small town in Texas, and with the help of his DOE scholarship money, enrolled at Texas A&M University. He's pursuing a degree in civil engineering, specializing in structures.

Before going back to start his junior year, Torres spent this past summer interning with DOE in the Richland Operations Office. "My internship with the U.S. Department of Energy has given me tremendous exposure to management, business and political elements," Torres said.



Left to right are Jeffery Vargas of DOE Headquarters; interns Jacob Torres, Reyna Baeza, Gabriel Hernandez and Martin Garibay; and Bartley Fain of the DOE Richland Operations Office.

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“My long-term plans are to become a practicing engineer following college. Who knows — perhaps I’ll run my own engineering firm one day.”

Gabriel Hernandez grew up in various areas in northern California, Oregon and Washington. After graduation in Sacramento, he joined the Navy and was trained to be a nuclear operator at the Nuclear Power Training Unit in Ballston Spa, N.Y. Now he’s working toward a degree in electrical engineering at the University of California at Davis.

“Once I graduate, I’ll owe the Navy four years of active-duty service as an officer, and four years of reserve service,” Hernandez explained, saying he wants to work on a nuclear submarine. “I decided to do this internship because the opportunity to meet so many business professionals and open the door for a future job with the DOE is something that I very much appreciate. Also, since there are so many prior Navy nukes working here, I figured the jobs here must be quite appealing to people coming from my background.”

Reyna Baeza recently graduated from Rio Hondo College in Whittier, Calif., with an associate degree in environmental technology. She’s now a student at California State Polytechnic University in Pomona, pursuing a bachelor’s in landscape architecture.

“During the 2000 and 2001 academic years, I was one of the recipients of a grant from the Hispanic Scholarship Fund,” she said. “I really looked forward to coming to Washington to gain valuable knowledge and insight into the policy issues that are dealt with here at the DOE Richland Operations Office.”

After Baeza earns her bachelor’s degree she plans to attend the University of Michigan for a master’s, also in landscape architecture. “Attending college has really opened up a whole new world for me,” she said. ■