



We are proud to introduce the 2019 Young Women in STEM Scholarship cohort:



Antonella Riega: Antonella Riega was born in Lima, Peru and is currently an undergraduate student at the University of New Mexico. She is working towards obtaining a dual degree in Biology and Psychology. Her love for STEM has landed her a position as an undergraduate researcher in the department of Neurosciences at UNM hospital. She is working on an honor's thesis. Her project focuses on analyzing the role of basic-helix-loop-helix (bHLH) transcription factor ASCL1 in glial cell development. When she is not working at the lab or studying for an exam, she can be found reading a book, writing or playing tennis.



Malia Kao: After taking an AP physics class during her junior year of high school, Malia set her mind on pursuing a degree in astrophysics at New Mexico Tech. That same year, she also decided to join the Army Reserves. Malia was recently accepted into the 5-year master's program at New Mexico Tech and is currently interning at Sandia National Laboratories as a year-round R & D intern. She plans on continuing her education with a physics PhD program upon completion of her master's. In her free time, Malia enjoys playing the violin, horseback riding and gardening.



Ronja Steinbach: Ronja will be attending the University of Hawaii at Manoa this fall and looks forward to studying marine biology. She has been volunteering and is now working in the Rudgers and Whitney Lab at the University of New Mexico Biology Department. Through that work, she has discovered her interest in molecular biology and fungi, and seeks to pursue those interests within marine biology. She also harbors an interest in coral reefs and their restoration with a passion for working on conservation and future sustainability. Ronja graduated from Albuquerque High School, where she was the president of the Math, Engineering, Science, and Achievement (MESA) club for two years and was an involved member of the community. She is very excited to begin this next chapter of her life and explore the wonders that the STEM fields have to offer.



Makayla Gates: Makayla is a rising senior at Valencia High School in Los Lunas, where she has a 4.286 GPA and ranks 1st in her class. She received the school's Departmental Outstanding Achievement Awards in PLTW Engineering, Math, English, and Science as well as Academic Achievement Awards 2 years in a row and is a member of the National Honor Society. Makayla has been a Jr. Docent and Peer Mentor at the New Mexico Museum of Natural History and Science, a year-round Nature Guide at the Albuquerque Biopark, and a Counselor-in-Training for the UNM Center for Diversity's Camp Rising Sun for campers with Autism Spectrum Disorder. She has won multiple science and research competitions, received the Thomas Edison Innovation Award, and was inducted into the National Young Inventors' Hall of Fame. Her latest project used satellite analysis comparing growth of the fungus known to cause the sometimes-fatal disease known as Valley Fever at sites in California and New Mexico as a potential screening device for preemptive medical intervention. She recently attended a summer program for high school students at Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. After graduation, she plans to attend college, pursuing a double major in physics and mathematics and, eventually, a Ph.D. in Theoretical Particle Physics to become a professor/researcher.



Daisy Belmares-Ortega: Daisy is a graduate of Albuquerque High School and proud to be a first-generation college student. Her journey in STEM began in the sixth grade through New Mexico's Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) program, which she continued to be a part of for seven years. MESA gave her the opportunity to explore various careers in science before making her own career decisions. Daisy found her passion and curiosity regarding flight by watching her parakeets fly, and her first flight on an airplane caused her much excitement and delight. Daisy became inspired to study aerospace engineering at the University of Southern California beginning this fall. Daisy draws her inspiration from her parents and their journey as an immigrant family. Daisy aspires to create opportunities for all women in science in the future.



Jennifer Johnson: Jennifer graduated from Las Cruces High School fourth in her class with a 4.48 GPA and participated in a wide variety of different activities like: FFA, the Varsity Bowling Team, the National Honor Society, and Student Venture, to name a few. She was also a Sunday school teacher for six years and participated in about 800 hours of community service during high school. In the fall of 2019, Jennifer plans to attend South Dakota School of Mines and Technology to earn her bachelor's in Metallurgical Engineering and, later, a master's in Chemical Engineering or Materials Science and Engineering. She plans to use this scholarship towards room and board during her freshman year. Jennifer's career goal is to engineer new or improved materials and processes to then patent.
