

# HERE FOR EVERY VOICE

Smith's Commitment to Scholarships

## OUR GOAL

\$75 million

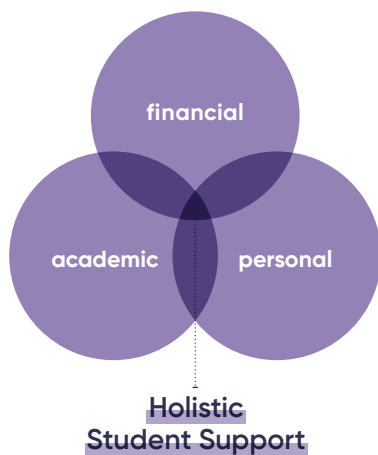
for scholarship aid

## TO DATE

5,000+ donations

## Scholarships are only the beginning

Once they're on campus, Smith students receive comprehensive support, equipping them for success.



[smith.edu/access](https://smith.edu/access)

## NEVER STOP LEARNING

# Smith's scholarship initiative opens doors to opportunity

BY MARY GILES

Diane Alvarez Benitez '22, a first-generation engineering and architecture student at Smith, learned the value of education from her father. He started night school to earn his GED when Diane was 5 years old. Last year they were both enrolled in college—it was Diane's first year and his last as a psychology undergraduate at California State University, Los Angeles—and would compare notes on such topics as inspiring middle school engineering students with a stronger curriculum, a project Diane had taken on. None of Diane's work at Smith would be possible without scholarship aid. "Financial aid gives students like me the opportunity to strive for a higher education," she says. "Coming from a low-income household, attending Smith wouldn't be imaginable otherwise."

Smith's Here for Every Voice initiative to raise \$75 million for scholarships is giving students like Diane an opportunity to find their voice at Smith—and change the trajectory of their lives and communities in the process.

### Why did you choose to come to Smith?

When I was touring colleges, I felt an immediate connection to Smith. I was in search of a school that valued its students and Smith is a place where students respect one another. The tight-knit community made me feel welcomed.

### What are you studying?

I'm studying engineering and architecture and want to go to graduate school for architecture, but really my ultimate goal is to never stop learning. I plan on giving back to my community by tutoring low-income high school students because I believe everyone should have an equal opportunity to receive academic help.

### Who has had the most impact on your life?

My father, Juan Alvarez. He's always been there for me, even as he worked during the day and attended school at night. Seeing my father go from washing cars to getting a job as a parental guidance counselor made me realize I could go to college, too.

### Best advice your dad ever gave you?

In middle school I hated math. My dad told me, "Treat math as your friend, not your enemy. Create a mutual relationship with it." I laughed at the idea of having a subject as a friend, but I realized he meant I should change my fixed mindset to a growth mindset and focus on learning rather than the actual grade. My father's saying has stuck with me, and on phone calls we often joke about my "friends."

### What accomplishment are you particularly proud of?

My experience presenting at Smith's Achieving Excellence in Mathematics, Engineering and Sciences (AEMES) Symposium, where I talked about my work in Professor Glenn Ellis's lab to revise the engineering curriculum taught in nearby middle schools. I am proud and thankful that I was granted the opportunity to work in a lab as a first-year student, and doubly proud that we are creating lesson plans that engage students in thinking critically.

### What's your favorite thing about Smith?

My classes. I enjoy the small class size and the freedom I have to choose what classes to take. I like how Smith cares about the well-being of students and I love the community of acceptance that it fosters.

### What does being a Smithie mean to you?

Being empowered.

**“Instead of worrying about how to pay for tuition, I can focus on my education.”**

**—Diane Alvarez Benitez**

Class of 2022

**How has your scholarship aid impacted you?**

I am grateful for the aid I receive because it shows that people are aware of how important higher education is for low-income students. Instead of worrying about how to pay for tuition, I can focus on my education and my father can focus on his work helping our community.

**Why should donors support this initiative?**

We need more female leadership in the professional world and supporting Smith College is a great way to support that.

**What's one little-known fact about you?**

I love Mexican muralists, especially David Alfaro Siqueiros and José Clemente Orozco. I reproduced their artwork onto small canvases to decorate my dorm.

Watch videos, read about more scholarship aid recipients, find out about events near you and learn how you can add your voice to our call for scholarship support.

**[smith.edu/access](https://smith.edu/access)**

