



Broad Scholar Arely Perez's Remarks at the 2006 Broad Prize

Thank you Mr. Broad.

Let me tell you a little bit about my life journey and how it has brought me here today.

I grew up in Houston, Texas, the only child of a single mother. My mother had a hard time finding a good job because she did not have an education and didn't speak English, but she always dreamt about seeing her little girl graduate from college. Through her own blood, sweat and tears, she struggled and sacrificed to make this dream a possibility.

Every day that I grew up, my mother worked long, hard hours in low-income jobs such as in maintenance and laundry services- often two jobs a day, just so we could get by. Although she worked hard every day, she always returned home with a smile to me – her pride and joy. My mother's dedication, love and support taught me to be a humble and hard-working individual. She is the person I most admire in the world.

It was difficult to watch my mother break her back to make ends meet. Finally, when I turned sixteen and I was old enough to work, I got a full-time job to help pay the rent and other bills. It was the least I could do after all she had done for me.

By getting a job, I knew I could help my mother financially. But by doing well in school, I knew I would make her the proudest parent of all. As I stand before you today, I can proudly report that I worked full-time during my junior and senior year of high school, but at the same time also made it to my classes, had perfect attendance, achieved an A+ average and graduated salutatorian.

After all the hard work I did, I still had concerns about how to pay for college.

The Broad Prize scholarship made the difference in allowing me to realize my dream. With the Broad Prize scholarship in hand, I enrolled in Texas A&M University, where I am now in my senior year.

Unfortunately, my mother could not be with me today, because recently we lost my grandfather, one of the most important people in my life. But I know that both she and my grandfather are so proud of me for going to college and for working hard each step of the way. Next fall, my mother, and my grandfather from above, will be watching as I walk across the stage and achieve my mother's – and my own dream.

At Texas A&M, I have learned so much academically and have taken advantage of the many opportunities such as learning how to extend my leadership skills that will help me for the rest of my life. College for me is only the beginning, because I am eager to build on my major, Physical Therapy, by specializing in the geriatrics branch after graduation. I want to be able to continue my education as a physical therapist to help other people improve their lives.

The Broad Scholarship has done so much for my mother and me. Without it, I honestly could not attain my dream of graduating from college and attending Physical Therapy School. This scholarship has not only helped me get through college, but has shown me how important it is to be a leader and create opportunities for other people. Mr. and Mrs. Broad, I would not be a senior at Texas A&M without the Broad Prize scholarship. If this scholarship makes a simple difference in one person's life, imagine what a vast difference it makes on thousands of students each year.

On behalf of my mother and myself, as we look forward to my college graduation next year, we thank you from the very bottom of our hearts and truly hope that you continue to make dreams come true for future generations. Thank you.