

# Scientist of the Month



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## Ana Fiorella Carrasco

Fiorella is a second-year BLaST Scholar and a senior Biological Sciences major at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. She was born in Bolivia, and has lived most of her life in Alaska. Fiorella is bilingual (English and Spanish), speaks some French, and is learning Russian. She is currently studying for the MCAT exam, ultimately planning to attend medical school for an MD/MPH or MD degree. In her free time, Fiorella enjoys spending time with her family and going to workout classes such as Zumba and cycling.

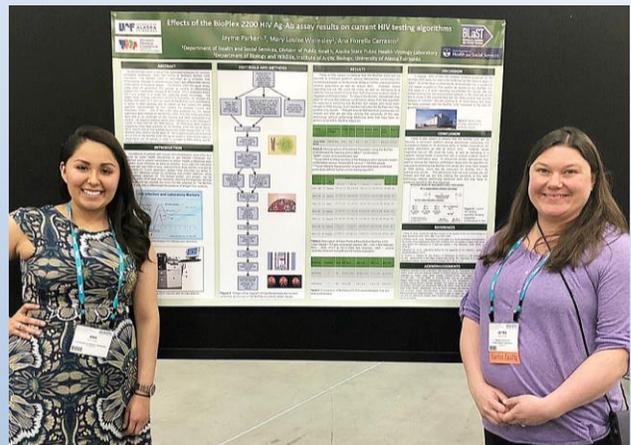
### Research

Fiorella's past research involved virology and using Next Generation Sequencing technology for the detection of Hepatitis C virus from people in Alaska. Currently, she is working on a research project exploring HIV and the incidences of false positivity in low prevalence populations and its effects on the current HIV testing algorithm. Fiorella emphasizes that her training in lab methods and procedures has greatly improved her understanding of the connection and depth of how patient testing is performed, as well as the importance of laboratory analysis. As a premed student, she strives to learn more about the biological and chemical concepts leading to procedures to become a better physician. She has presented her research at the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) November 2017 in Phoenix, AZ; at the University of Alaska

Biomedical Research Conference (UA-BRC) May 2018 in Anchorage, AK; the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) Conference June 2018 in Pasadena, CA; and will present at the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/ Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) Conference October 11-13, 2018 in San Antonio, TX.

### Mentoring

Fiorella has been mentored on several different levels through being a Scholar at BLaST. Through her involvement in Dr. Jack Chen's work at the Alaska State Virology Lab, she has been mentored extensively by UAF graduate student Jayme Parker. Fiorella has also found ways to expand her own mentoring capabilities as a peer mentor through her involvement in the UAF Premedical Society, which she joined as a freshman. In her past two years as the club's President, she has enjoyed having the chance to share her knowledge with underclassmen premed students, as others shared with her when she was new. An example of peer mentoring, Fiorella was also selected as one of several BLaST scholar ambassadors, which demonstrates her ability to give guidance to her peers, but also her ability to represent the BLaST program at outreach events.



Above: Fiorella Carrasco (l) and her mentor Jayme Parker (r) present a poster at the 2018 Association of Public Health Laboratories conference, June 3-5, 2018.