Raisa Y. Loucil-Alicea
2013-2014 APS K-12 Minority Outreach Fellow

Overview:
In addition to giving me the opportunity of attending the 2013 and 2014 Experimental Biology and the 2013 SACNAS meetings, the APS K-12 Minority Outreach Fellowship gave me the opportunity to talk about what physiology is, what physiologist do, and how to become a physiologist to 60 students from MAS Integrated School in Añasco, Puerto Rico.

Experimental Biology 2013 and 2014:
Participating in the 2013 EB meeting gave me the opportunity to present my research to fellow physiologists and to improve my presentation skills. In the 2014 EB, I participated in a panel for Life Science Teachers and Students in which I talked about my experiences as a graduate student and my research. In both meetings, 2013 and 2014, I attended several workshops and seminars that contributed to my career development.

I also participated in the APS activities for Minority Fellows, in which I had a mentor from my research area and gave me valuable advice and shared her experiences.

Physiology Understanding (PhUn) Week Activities:
As part of the fellowship, I coordinate a PhUn Week Activity at MAS Integrated School in Añasco, Puerto Rico. Students from 11th and 12th grades participated in activities focused in understanding: what is physiology, how to become a physiologist and what they do. In addition, they also learned basic concepts about the cardiovascular, respiratory, and central nervous system physiology. Students learned how to measure the blood pressure with a sphygmomanometer, created a lung model, and had the opportunity to see and touch a human brain, borrowed by the Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences. Results from a pre- and post-test showed that the students’ knowledge about basic physiology principles improved significantly after the activity, demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of the PhUn on students.
Also, I collaborated with Dr. Gladys Chompre and a group of graduate students from the Ponce School of Medicine in a PhUn Week Activity at the San Conrado School in Ponce, Puerto Rico. In this activity, we talked about physiology to students from 10th and 11th grades.

2013 Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) Meeting:

I had the opportunity to attend the 2013 SACNAS Meeting in San Antonio, TX, where I participated in the APS booth. It was really gratifying to talk to people about APS, its vision, and the benefits of becoming a member. While I was at the APS booth, I had the privilege of meeting the Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, Dr. Martin Lee Chalfie, and shared scientific experiences with him, since I work with the protein that he discovered and developed, GFP. In addition, I did networking with scientists in my research area, attended several workshops and scientific talks.

I would like to thank APS K-12 Minority Outreach Fellowship Committee Members for giving me the opportunity to talk to high school students about Physiology and to consider it as a career. Although Puerto Rico is an U.S. territory, the geographical distance limits the access to this kind of activities, such as PhUn Week, that has a positive impact on students. Personally, the fellowship contributed enormously to my career development, since it gave me the opportunity to develop my presentation skills, networking, and participate of many career development workshops. I plan to continue participating in PhUn Week Activities to promote physiology or science among students.