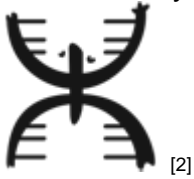


# Journey to ABRCMS: From Puerto Rico to Phoenix <sup>[1]</sup>

Submitted by [Nicole E. Félix](#) <sup>[2]</sup> on 7 November 2017 - 2:05pm





The first week of November 2017 was a special week in Phoenix, Arizona. The capital city of The Grand Canyon State was host to the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS for short), a four-day event where minority students can present their research, share experiences, and network with scientists. Thousands of undergraduates, post-baccalaureates, and graduate students attended this year and were able to present their work either as a poster or oral presentation. I was fortunate enough to have been able to attend and present the research I had done over the summer.

I have to acknowledge Dr. Barbara Kazmierczak, Dr. Anthony Koleske, and Dr. Faye Rogers, directors of the BioMed SURF program at the Yale School of Medicine where I had done the research I presented at ABRCMS for funding my trip and Yolanda Quiñones (Program Director for BioMed SURF) and Cheryl DeFilippo (Associate Director for Program Administration at the M.D./Ph.D. program at Yale) for assisting me every step of the way. Without them, I would not have been able to attend this amazing conference.

It was a very nerve-wracking experience presenting my poster for the first time, especially considering I was going to be judged by people who have Ph.D.'s and post-docs. However, it was also a great learning experience because I got feedback from the judges and was able to have a conversation with them about my science. It helped me grow as a STEM student and as a future grad school researcher.

The conference also had a number of professional development workshops, which gave me essential tools for my future graduate career. The speakers were scientists and engaged us with their stories and their research. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions during Q&A sessions. One particularly inspiring story was that of Dr. Alfredo Quiñones-Hinojosa, a Mexican immigrant who went from farm worker to distinguished scientist and brain surgeon. His journey was filled with trials, tribulations, hard work, dedication, and passion. Heck, he spoke with such passion, that he almost convinced me to become a brain surgeon, and I've always said that being a doctor is not for me. If you haven't heard of Dr. Q, I encourage you to look up his story, after you finish reading this one, of course.

The conference allowed me to network with grad schools I'm interested in, and this will definitely place me ahead of the curve when applying to grad schools. I also met a lot of wonderful people from all over the country. And, it was great to see a pretty big representation of Puerto Ricans at ABRCMS. It was hard to miss them considering they had *pleneras*, *güiros*, and flags during the banquet and awards ceremony.

Although it was pretty daunting to participate at such a big conference for the first time and alone, it was an incredible experience. One where I learned a lot and grew, not only as a scientist, but as a person.

---

**Source URL:**<https://www.cienciapr.org/en/blogs/members/journey-abrcms-puerto-rico-phoenix?language=en>

#### **Links**

[1] <https://www.cienciapr.org/en/blogs/members/journey-abrcms-puerto-rico-phoenix?language=en> [2]  
<https://www.cienciapr.org/en/user/niceden12?language=en>