



# Associated Colleges of Illinois

**Montserrat "Montse" Cancino-Aguilar**

**Knox College**

**Michele and Peter S. Willmott Minority Student Leadership Fund**



It wasn't easy for Montse Cancino-Aguilar to leave the southside of Chicago for [Knox College](#) in Galesburg. She knew that Knox was a good school and a place to grow. But interacting with people different from her was new, and she was often homesick. Fortunately, she says, Knox stresses diversity, inclusion and open-mindedness, ideals that were important to her, she says.

[Click to see video!](#)



Now a sophomore, Cancino-Aguilar majors in biology, with minors in Latin American studies and environmental sciences. "I want to go to medical school or go to graduate school first in botany or holistic medicine first, and then go to medical school," she says. "I actually want to work in a Latin American country because their ways of practicing medicine are more holistic than the United States, and they're more hospitality-based. I want to do something that I really enjoy, and that's working with people but at the same time, expressing my love for the sciences."

Cancino-Aguilar makes the most of her Knox education. When not in class, she is treasurer of Lo Nuestro, a cultural club focused on Latino awareness, a member of Delta Delta Delta sorority

and an alternate resident assistant. She also works in the college's financial aid office, where her bilingual skills are helpful.

Her ACI scholarship through the Willmott Fund is a vital piece of her college education, most which she funds on her own. "I am at Knox thanks to that. It honestly made all of the difference in whether I could come back to Knox. If I didn't have it, I wouldn't be here. Both of my parents were unemployed my entire freshman year."

"I want to say thank you," Cancino-Aguilar says. "This a really tough topic for me to talk about. I have had to help my parents pay their bills, and I've had to buy my siblings clothes and shoes because my parents couldn't. So, I'm incredibly thankful to those people who don't know who I am but gave me the opportunity to come back and finish everything I've ever dreamed of. Thanks to the Willmott Fund scholarship that I have from ACI, I am here at Knox continuing my education as a first-generation student."