



# Associated Colleges of Illinois

**Yasmin Lara**  
**Olivet Nazarene University**  
**ACI General Scholarship**



Yasmin Lara chose [Olivet Nazarene University](#) because it was a small college where she would get to know many students. "I wasn't just a number," she says. From Antioch, Illinois, Lara, now a senior, had considered a career as a physician. But she says Dr. Denise Anderson, a professor of social work, encouraged her to follow Jesus' example and her heart, and it led to an interest in social work, now her major.

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"I want to work with at-risk youth, specifically in the city of Chicago. That's where I feel called to be eventually. Through a mission trip, I was able to go to Englewood, and that's where I found my passion for at-risk youth in the city," Lara says. For her, a key area of service is combatting human trafficking. She explained that after she completes her bachelor's degree, she may attend graduate school to earn a master's degree in social work.

Staying in school has not been easy for Lara. In 2018, her mother had some serious medical problems, which she shared with a financial advisor on campus. "She had a brain aneurysm and surgery, and currently she is not working," Lara says. "My Dad is the only one working. That's makes us very financially unstable." Lara is the oldest of three children. Her father owns a commercial painting company.

The ACI Scholarship was a big help, enabling her to continue her college education. "With my Mom's unstable medical condition, just hearing that was a big relief for my parents, but for me as well," Lara says. "Finding those resources helped me through my journey. It's been so important because I am able to not only teach others but show them and be an inspiration." Lara has been able to get other sources of financial aid to remain in school.

In addition, she is an intern for Center for Hope, a social service agency, where she is learning about running nonprofits, she says. She was part of the university's Associate Student Council, representing her class. Lara was also a first-generation student secretary/advisor. She's been involved with Upper Room, a ministry that supports spiritual formation of Christians, and volunteers with a local Big Sister-Little Sister Program.