



Aileen Duran
University of St. Francis
ACI General Scholarship



Aileen Duran remembers growing up with various health-related problems and feeling as though few people were listening to her health concerns. "I've had two surgeries now to fix my knees," Duran said. "I wonder if this could have been avoided if people listened to me. I want to go into the health-care field so that others don't have to go through what I did." That is exactly what Duran has done. Today, she is a sophomore majoring in nursing at the [University of St. Francis](#) (USF) in Joliet.

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Duran is one of three sisters who grew up in Chicago, the children of parents with roots in Mexico. She applied to more than 20 colleges and universities before deciding on USF, she said. "I really liked St. Francis' nursing program," Duran said. It was the passing rates on nursing licensure exams, up-to-date technology and simulations labs that convinced her.

Duran sees herself working as a surgical nurse or possibly for a government agency, such as the FBI. The FBI? Duran explained a family member works in the agency, and using her nursing degree for a career as a forensic scientist is an attractive idea, she says.

Along with her interests in health care, Duran is a musician. She attended the Chicago High School for the Arts and plays the oboe. Duran currently plays in a chamber group with the Joliet Symphony Orchestra. She also has learned how to play the saxophone and plays with university's pep band.

One of Duran's goals for this academic year was to live on campus and avoid commuting, if possible. Because of her heavy class load, which helps qualify her for scholarships and grants, living on the Joliet campus would be a great help, she said. Duran learned of the ACI General Scholarship through discussions with a financial aid counselor. "As soon as that meeting ended I instantly went to apply. When I found out I got it, I was very, very happy," Duran said.

"That scholarship is what helped me come back to on-campus living," she said. "We're able to use that toward other things so we can save the money we have to living on campus, which was very vital to me."

"Coming from a low income, minority family, immigrant family, it really is hard to get the funds to go to college," Duran added. "It means so much just to be able to return this year and be able to be here right now. I really can't emphasize enough the impact it has made on me and my family. It's a blessing."

In addition to the Joliet orchestra and the pep band, Duran is a member of USF's Latino Honor Society and Latino Club.