



# Graduating Students, One Community at a Time

## Program Description:

The ASPIRE award will be used to support the enhancement of the Museum's exemplary college readiness program for students in grades 9-12. Nationally recognized as a highly effective model for increasing the number of underrepresented students interested in and prepared to pursue STEM fields ASPIRE will serve 63 highly motivated, low-income, first-generation college-bound students from five of the lowest performing high schools in MDCPS, the fourth largest school district in the nation.

Key elements include ongoing college counseling services, a week-long college tour for 9th graders, entrance exam preparation, application assistance and sustained encouragement and support. The Museum works closely with Miami Dade Public Schools to track student progress and provides additional support where needed to keep students on track for college. This unique partnership between a science center, and a large urban district demonstrates what can be achieved through collective impact and a focused effort to assist at-risk youth to stay in school and pursue postsecondary study.

The award provided staff support for a full time ASPIRE counselor who will oversee a range of counseling services, expand mentoring support through the use of near-peer (college level students) tutors, plan and coordinate the college tour, building early awareness and self efficacy among students that college is in their future. In addition to providing ongoing assistance to navigate the college application process, the ASPIRE counselor will also work closely with families as advocates to keep students on the pathway to graduate from high school, ready for college and career. The ASPIRE counselor will identify scholarships and assist parents in the submission of the financial aid student application as well as identify and support students in the submission of scholarship requests.



**Students:**  
63



**Funding:**  
\$300,000

- 2005 Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring, our nation's highest honor for mentoring.
- Currently leading a national network of science museums working to increase girls' interest and participation in science and technology.
- At the forefront of leadership to bring the resources of the museum community to the K 12 enterprise.

"The Aspire program has guided me through the year. Ownership, leadership, and confidence are the qualities that I have been taught through this program. All this work has helped me to want to strive towards college, and I am one step closer."

Minverva Olazabal