

## LATINO GAY PRIDE NEW SCHOLARSHIP LAUNCHES

David Martinez knows how formative the college experience can be.

As the first one in his family to graduate from high school and go to college, he didn't have help applying for scholarships. In fact, he didn't see many other people going off to college at all. But he found out that college can make a big difference in life, especially for sexual minorities.

"College was my way out," he says. "It was where I was able to move off to the big city. It was where I was able to get to a place where I could feel safe and come out."

Martinez is now the chair of Portland Latino Gay Pride, which this year has established a \$1,000 scholarship for Latino LGBT students or students of LGBT parents. The scholarship will be officially announced this month at the Portland Latino Gay Pride Festival.

This isn't the organization's first scholarship effort – for the past two years it has donated \$1,000 to a scholarship run by the Hispanic Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. But that scholarship was for Latino students in Oregon. Portland Latino Gay Pride wanted to create its own scholarship for Latino LGBT students because "that's what our celebration's about," Martinez says.

"Knowing how expensive education is," he says, "knowing that in order to find a good job, the more education you have, the better – we wanted to support our future leaders."

Only 21 percent of Latinos in the U.S. have college degrees, the lowest percentage of any ethnic group, according to the nonprofit Excelencia in Education. That's compared to 57 percent of Asians, 44 percent of whites

and 30 percent of blacks. One major barrier to college enrollment for many Latinos is citizenship. Portland Latino Gay Pride doesn't ask for Social Security numbers or other proof of residency so that undocumented immigrants will be able to apply.

Martinez encourages other organizations to do the same so that everyone who wants the college experience can have it.

"Anyone who has had the experience of going off to college or to better themselves can tell you," Martinez says, "that when you're dealing with identity and figuring out who you are – figuring out what it means to be gay, what it means to be Latino — it's great to be able to do it in a place that's safe. You're able to ask hard questions and be in an environment where you can figure it out, and I think that's what college does."

Portland Latino Gay Pride Festival is July 21. [LatinoGayPridePDX.com](http://LatinoGayPridePDX.com)



## PORTLAND AREA BUSINESS ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

RISA LUTHER, Franklin High School, plans to go to Macalester College.

Winner of \$1,500 Barbara Roberts Scholarship

*"I think ignorance is probably the worst problem for people – not hate or dislike of something, just ignorance. If you don't understand something, it gives you motivation to not associate with it, and I don't think that's the way to go about it, especially in a city like Portland, where the pride community is really big."*

SAMANTHA MASSON, Portland Community College, plans to transfer to University of Oregon.

Winner of \$1,000 general scholarship

*"My father is gay, and I've grown up around him and his friends and my gay uncle, too, so it's always been normal to me. Then when you go to college, you find out it's not normal for other people. I want to just let people know that everyone is just people and let them know about issues with the gay community, like equality. I just want to be a voice for that."*

JORDAN OSSERMAN, Dartmouth College, plans to attend Birkbeck, University of London.

Winner of \$1,500 Terry Bean Scholarship

*"Working on LGBT issues is important to me because I believe that marginalization on the basis of sexual-identity and gender identity is fundamentally connected to other forms of marginalization and injustice. As a gay person I feel particularly equipped to understand, articulate and resist LGBT oppression, and I hope that in doing so I can contribute to a larger movement for social transformation."*

