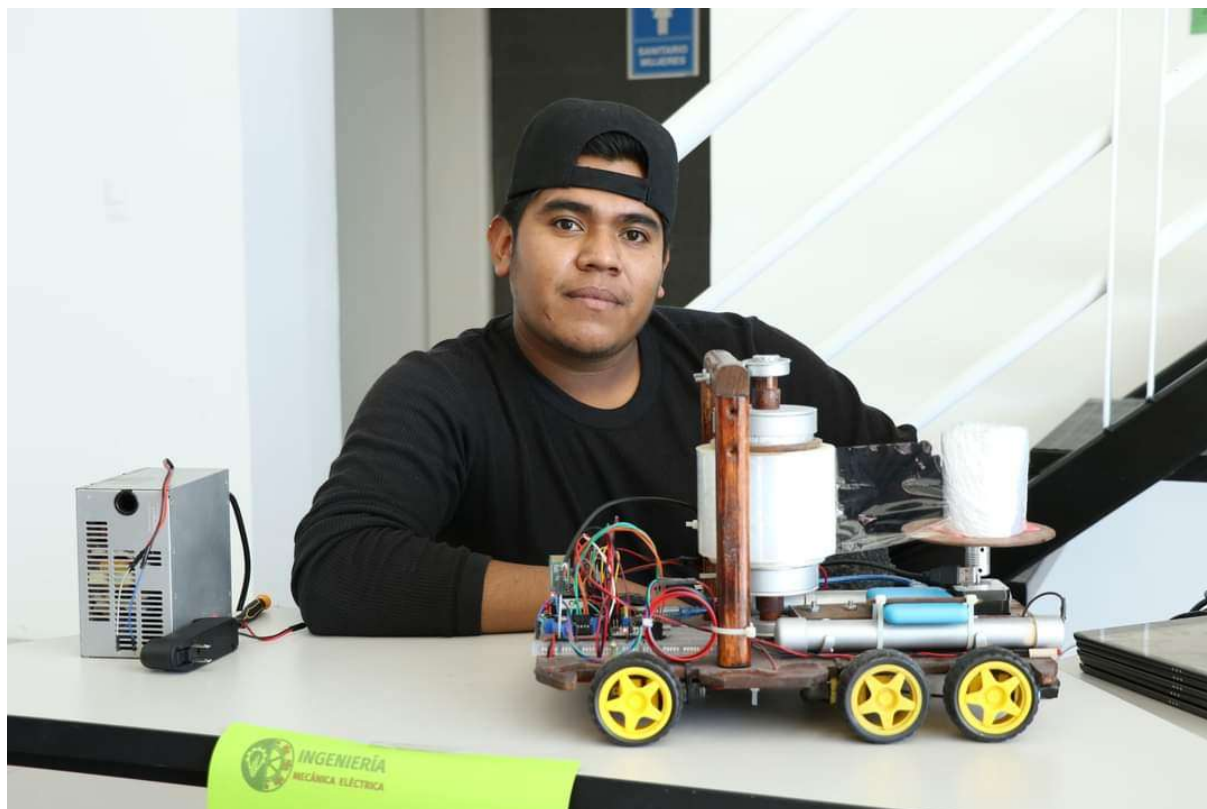




HUICHOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND (HSF) NEWSLETTER – FALL 2022



Faustino López, HSF scholarship recipient since 2021-2022, with a project for his program in Electronic and Computational Engineering. Faustino will graduate in the Spring.

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HUICHOL SCHOLARSHIP FUND (HSF)

The HSF is a charity that assists Huichol (Wixárika) youth to acquire university level skills and education in order to support community efforts (throughout the Mexican states of Jalisco, Nayarit, Durango and Zacatecas) to strengthen Wixárika cultural and political autonomy.

*Launched in 2018-2019, and now completing its fifth year of operation, the HSF relies on donations from Americans and Canadians, many residing in Mexico, to provide scholarships to Wixárika students each year. **You can donate here:** <https://www.wixarika.org/donate> (Remember to specify your donation is for the scholarship fund in the space for 'special instructions to the vendor.')*

Operating under the umbrella of the Wixárika Research Center (WRC), the HSF is run by its co-founders, Diana Negrín and Brian McDougall, with assistance from our parent organization: the WRC. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of the volunteers who assist in administering the program and its fundraising activities, including Yvonne Negrín, María Cruz, Jimena Márquez, Irene Cohn, Manuel López Delgado, Art Fumerton, Kristal Ruíz, and Dan Grippio.

In addition to supporting the HSF, we encourage you to learn more about and support the three organizations that have nurtured and supported this scholarship program from the start:

- Wixárika Research Center: <https://wixarika.org/>
- International Friendship Club: <https://ifcvallarta.org/>
- Volcanes Community Education Project/Niños de Roma AC: <https://volcanesproject.com/>

For more information, please contact: brianmcdougall25@gmail.com

[1] The summer 2022 intake of new students

Last summer's HSF application process generated 31 applicants, 16 women and 15 men. However, only 18 people supplied all the information required to complete the process. Because of the large number of 2021-2022 HSF recipients continuing with the program for this, the 2022-2023 academic year, only 6 new recipients could be added. In addition, a former HSF recipient who withdrew from university during the pandemic, had her scholarship reinstated this summer.

That means the HSF is supporting 24 students in 2022-2023: 12 men and 12 women. Of that number, 18 students are on regular two-term scholarships (\$7000 pesos) while 6 received half year scholarships (\$3500 pesos) because they were scheduled to complete programs in December 2022. (Some undergraduate programs can take 4.5 or 5 years of full-time study.)

The 2022-2023 applicants came from many different Wixárika communities, and are studying in a wide variety of fields, including linguistics, nutrition, agriculture, business, mathematics, and law. The two most common fields of study remain education and medical professions like nursing. (This year we have two students enrolled in a general practice/surgery/midwifery program, which has no Canadian or American equivalent. Graduates are more highly trained than nurses, but less so than medical doctors.)

Many students who applied for an HSF award are studying in Jalisco, at universities like the University of Guadalajara (CUNorte campus) and ITESO, the private Jesuit university in Guadalajara. Others are attending schools in the state of Nayarit, at institutions like the Autonomous University of Nayarit. However, about a quarter of HSF applicants attend universities outside those two states.



The HSF application process requires students to submit information about their grades, field of study, projected graduation date, and their economic needs. It also requires them to obtain letters of recommendation and submit an essay explaining how their university education ties into the future needs of their Wixárika communities.

María Fernanda Ramírez completed her degree in Biomedical Engineering in June 2022 at the University of Guadalajara. The traditional Wixárika clothing she is wearing in both pictures (a “traje”)

was made and embroidered by her sisters.

In June 2022, six HSF volunteers convened to review the 2022 applications and make the final selections. Besides the two founders of the HSF, Diana Negrín da Silva and Brian McDougall,

those involved included three university professors (María Cruz from San Jose State University, Jimena Márquez from McGill University, and Manuel López Delgado from the Autonomous University of Ciudad Juárez) and a long-time supporter of the WRC, Irene Cohn.

In the spring of 2022, we streamlined the HSF application process to permit applicants to



upload required documents via the WRC's website. Despite that improvement, we are concerned about the number of students who initiate the application process but fail to complete it.

To get a higher rate of completed applications, we are discussing the idea of offering online sessions about our application process for the spring of 2023. That would give prospective applicants a chance to ask questions and get answers, hopefully leading to more completions. We may also produce a FAQ sheet about the HSF program and its application requirements.

Recent HSF graduate, María Fernanda Ramírez, shows the title of her biomedical engineering thesis project: "Technical foundations and practical principles for the management of the flux gas analyzer FLUKE VT-650."

[2] What the new 2022-2023 HSF recipients told us about themselves.

The six successful applicants are concentrated in fields that attract many Wixárika students. Three students are in medical related programs, one is in nursing, and two in a general practice/surgery/midwifery program. The other three are studying education, mathematics, and law. Here we summarize what their summer 2022 applications told us about their background, motivations and needs.

Laura Valdez Candelario

Laura is studying nursing at the University of Guadalajara's (CUNorte) campus in Colotlán, Jalisco and is from Nueva Colonia, Tuapurie, also known as Santa Catarina Cuexcomatitlán.

Laura told us she would use her scholarship to cover a variety of expenses, including paying for some of the materials required by her program, transportation to school, rent and food. She has two daughters, which adds to the complexity of funding her education. Part of Laura's motivation for completing her studies involves the desire to give them a better future.

In her application, Laura told us about a childhood experience when her mother had tuberculosis. The treatment was very expensive. Laura sees her medical training as a way to ensure she can better assist family and community members who become ill.

Laura recognizes that many members of her community have little confidence in the existing health services, in part because of language and cultural barriers between Spanish speaking medical professionals and the Wixaritari. With a native Wixárika nurse available, those barriers should diminish and community confidence in the medical service should grow.

Osbaldo Cosío González

Osbaldo is enrolled in the general practice/surgery/midwifery program at the University of Guadalajara. He is from Pueblo Nuevo in the community of Tuapurie.

In his application, Osbaldo told us he moved to Guadalajara four years ago to study. However, being an Indigenous student in a big city has proven difficult. Far from his family and community, Osbaldo joined an organization for urban Indigenous youth (Jóvenes Indígenas Urbanos) which has provided him with friendship and support. That group has become a kind of virtual family for him. “Those of us who make up this group share the same experiences and we help each other, and that has helped me personally.”

The JIU also assisted Osbaldo in coping with the discrimination he and other Indigenous students face in the city. The group seeks to strengthen the visibility and legitimacy of Indigenous youth in various ways. It is building pride among Indigenous youth in Guadalajara.

Osbaldo explained that since his university studies are not subsidized by his family, he has funded his education by working as a waiter on weekends. But paying for food, transportation and rent, things that are far more expensive in the city, has not been easy. The medical program he is enrolled in is very demanding, making part-time work on weekdays impossible. His financial insecurity makes it difficult for him to get all the materials he needs for his studies, especially the very expensive books and a uniform.

Like Laura, Osbaldo talked about the problems associated with the current level of health services available in his home community. He believes that with more trained Indigenous medical professionals the Wixárika will be able to push for better healthcare policies and services that are tailored to Indigenous peoples.

Norberto López

Norberto is from the community of Tateikié and is enrolled in a law program at the Intercultural University of Puebla.

Since 2004, the Mexican university system has included about a dozen publicly funded, Indigenous-oriented universities specializing in intercultural education. They aim to promote dialogue between cultures as a way of responding to the historical and recent demands of Mexico’s Indigenous population.

Norberto sees Mexico as a place with many social problems, in desperate need of more young people dedicated to addressing them. In the future, he wants to work with the most vulnerable members of Indigenous communities to deal with the discrimination (racial, religious, and ethnic), abuses of authority and violence they face. He thinks there is a lack of state intervention to deal with systematic violations of human and Indigenous rights.

Norberto's focus is on working with members of Wixárika communities and people in the legal professions to change the current situation. His application stressed the importance of government and institutional support for Indigenous students so Wixárika villages will have more educated youth to assist their communities.

Norberto plans to use the HSF scholarship to cover some of his basic expenses, including food, books and other school supplies. He explained that since he attends university in the state of Puebla, a long way from home, he has no opportunity of benefiting from the cheaper living at home. While his family tries to support him financially, he often cannot afford even his basic needs. Norberto also told us the HSF award would assist with the cost of the long-distance travel between his home community in Jalisco and his university in Puebla.

Mariana Carrillo Robles

Mariana is in the general practice/surgery/midwifery program at the University of Guadalajara. She hails from the community of Tateikié, also known as San Andrés Cohamiata.

Echoing Osbaldo, Mariana explained her academic program is so heavy it prevents her from having a part-time job to assist with expenses. While she works during the summer months, she is unable to make enough money to cover food, rent and school related fees during the academic year.

Mariana told us her parents have another child in university and one in high school, creating family financial needs they cannot meet. The HSF award will not only make her life easier, but also lessen the financial burden on her parents, who can direct their support to her siblings.

Mariana plans to use her scholarship to pay for books and for the surgical uniform necessary in the clinic work that is one of her program's requirements. As a third-year student, she now needs to spend more time in clinics to learn the practical side of her vocation. Until this year, she was borrowing the necessary uniform from other students, but that is not sustainable with the increased clinic time she now faces. She also plans to use part of the scholarship to buy essential tools of her trade, like a stethoscope and a baumanometer (a device to measure blood pressure). Another expense she plans to cover with the HSF award is the cost for public transportation. With her increased clinical work, she must commute to seven different locations in Guadalajara to take classes and see patients.

Mariana plans to return to her home community once she finishes her degree. She explained that many community members are illiterate, and many have not mastered Spanish. In those

circumstances, having a medical professional that can address community members in their own language is very important. Mariana wants community members to be able to access medical services in their own language, so they feel safe, understand their treatment, and don't worry so much about the difficulties of explaining their medical condition in a second language. Mariana said she already told her family she plans to travel into smaller and more remote villages to ensure people do not rely on the home remedies that sometimes make their health worse.

Hermelindo López Vázquez

Hermelindo is enrolled in the education program at University of Guadalajara's CUNorte campus in Colotlán. He is from Santa Cruz in the community of Waut+a or San Sebastián Teponahuaxtlán.

Hermelindo's application told us he left home at an early age to spend three years at secondary school and another three years at high school. During that period, he learned enough Spanish to continue his studies at CUNorte.

Hermelindo wants to be a teacher. His application attests to his willingness to go to any community to work. His greatest concern is to ensure education assists youth to acquire "the value and principle of being good people in this world...to live in harmony." He believes that is best for the future of his Wixárika community.

Hermelindo's initial period of university studies proved difficult. The high academic standard and his lack of financial resources made it difficult for him to continue. After dropping out, he spent three years working to save enough to go back to school. However, that return to university was complicated by the onset of the pandemic. Without a laptop on which to watch lectures and complete assignments, his studies became far more complicated. Eventually, he bought a cellphone as a substitute, an inadequate solution. He struggled to attend virtual classes and complete his work online. One of his priorities was to use his HSF award to buy the laptop that is so important to completing his program.

Mario de la Cruz Carillo

Mario is studying mathematics at the Autonomous University of Nayarit. When he applied, he only had a single term left to complete.

Mario is very conscious of how many Wixárika students drop out of school and has identified problems learning math as a key barrier to academic success. He wants to change that by becoming a math teacher and a role model for others.

Mario started his university program in 2019-2020 so he was one of the students most affected by the 2020 onset of the pandemic. In his application, he noted the difficulties he faced because he did not own a laptop or have the required internet connections to shift to online learning. Nevertheless, he was able to continue his academic work and remain in his program.

Mario told us that like many Indigenous students, he has never received a scholarship. He also said the severe financial difficulties faced by Indigenous youth who move to the city to attend university undermines their chances of completion.

Mario's application suggested he would use the funds to cover transportation costs and to prepare for his transition from school to work.

Xitlali Ríos Sandoval

Xitali is a nursing student at the Technological University of Nayarit and hails from Paso de Alica, Nayarit.

Xitali is a single mother who first received an HSF award in 2020-2021. However, the pandemic derailed her studies. She withdrew from university in 2021 and did not receive an HSF award during 2021-2022. However, she remained in touch and re-applied to the HSF program last summer. After much deliberation, we found her application compelling enough to fund the final year of her nursing program.

[3] The main universities HSF students attend

HSF recipients attend many universities throughout Mexico, however about two thirds of our beneficiaries attend one of five key institutions located in the states of Jalisco and Nayarit. Here is a short profile of each.

University of Guadalajara (UdeG)

The University of Guadalajara is a very large public institution, with almost 300,000 students attending one of its campuses throughout the state of Jalisco. (That number includes almost 140,000 high school students.) Naturally, the largest of its nine campuses is in the city of Guadalajara, where the UdeG offers a very wide array of academic programs. Many Wixárika students attend University in Guadalajara to access programs that are unavailable at smaller satellite campuses of UdeG or at other smaller universities.

CUNorte – University Center of the North

CUNorte is one of the nine campuses that are part of the University of Guadalajara. Located in the small northern Jalisco town of Colotlán (population of about 20,000) CUNorte has about 4000 students registered. The university offers bachelor's degrees in the social sciences, technology, health, and administration. One of its main attractions for our students is its proximity to their home communities, and the strong presence of Indigenous and rural students. Recently, CUNorte has strengthened its commitment to Wixárika students and communities with several new initiatives.

Esmeralda López, HSF recipient since 2021-2022, being presented with recognition for her studies in agronomy at CUNorte.



Western Institute of Technology and Advanced Studies (ITESO)

ITESO is a prestigious private Jesuit University located in Guadalajara, with about 12,000 students. One its attractions for Wixárika students is ITESO's long-standing orientation towards Indigenous communities in the northern part of Jalisco. It has a presence in some Wixárika communities through community development projects in the fields of education, health and economic development. While it attracts some Wixárika students, its status as a private institution means students must pay tuition. (Public universities in Mexico have no tuition, although many programs charge additional fees.) Even though some subsidies are available, the financial barrier is insurmountable for many Indigenous students.

Technological University of Nayarit (UTNay)

UTNay is a public university, founded by the state about 20 years ago. It has about 3000 students at its campus in Tepic. Located close to some Wixárika communities, especially the growing Wixárika population in the city of Tepic itself, UTNay is the institution of choice for a significant number of Wixárika and other indigenous students.

Autonomous University of Nayarit (UAN)

The publicly funded Autonomous University of Nayarit is located in Tepic. With about 30,000 students across various university programs and in 15 preparatory schools throughout the state, UAN attracts a sizeable portion of Wixárika students. Proximity to Wixárika communities and the lower cost of living in Tepic as compared to Guadalajara, make this an attractive option.

[4] Recent development at WRC

The Wixárika Research Center, the parent organization for the HSF, was very busy during 2022. Besides continuing its support to 24 Wixárika undergraduate students in 2021-2022, and welcoming a new 2022-2023 cohort of scholarship recipients, WRC was involved in several other activities and projects.

In 2022, WRC continued to organize, consolidate and categorize its archive of Wixárika art,



culture and recent history, which includes original community documents, newspaper and journal articles on a variety of topics including the political, ecological and cultural history of the Wixárika People.

WRC also ran a second summer of biocultural workshops in Wirikuta (the sacred territory of the Wixárika) with the participation of 30 people from different communities. Bringing together Wixaritari, small farmers and allies for the

conservation and regeneration of the sacred land of Wirikuta, this intercultural project is vital to building solidarity, protecting Wirikuta and supporting small farmers and Wixárika communities. We are happy to report that several of the participants were HSF scholarship recipients.

The workshops addressed issues like community economic development, female community participation and empowerment, mesquite processing, ecological technologies and carried out a hands-on reforestation of the Las Margaritas elementary school.



The summer 2022 workshop program was carried out with the participation of sister organizations, including Arborigen, ConcentrArte, Etneoeco, and Casa Wilmot as well as activists from the San Luis Potosí and Wixárika sierras.

WRC also assisted in establishing a new sister non-profit organization in Mexico with the objective of continuing its ecological, educational and cultural work in Wixárika communal and sacred territories.

Finally, after more than 20 years in Oakland, California, the WRC moved its headquarters to a smaller office in Berkeley.

To learn more about the WRC and its various initiatives please consult the organization's website (<https://www.wixarika.org/>) and follow its Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/WixarikaRC/>)

[5] The HSF's current financial picture

Thanks to the continuing support of our donors, the HSF is now in its fifth year supporting Wixárika students.

Despite a deteriorating economic situation for many Americans and Canadians in 2022, the HSF received a total of \$9,460 US in donations during the calendar year. That more than covered current expenditures for scholarships. (Each student gets a scholarship of \$7,000 pesos (about \$350 US), paid out in August and January installments.) With the equivalent of 21 full scholarships for the 2022-2023 academic year, the HSF will pay out about \$8400 US to students.

Over time, we are slowly building a surplus that gives the HSF a financial cushion against all the financial commitments we have accepted. Each summer, when we accept a crop of new students into the program, we commit to supporting them not just for a single year, but for all

the years remaining in their undergraduate programs. For example, when we accept a second-year student enrolled in a four-year program, we are creating a three-year financial obligation (\$21,000 pesos) for the HSF, even though we don't have sufficient funds on hand to pay out more than the amount of their scholarship for that year (\$7,000 pesos).

From the start, those of us who administer the HSF on your behalf understood that running the HSF program this way entails a risk. Our long-term financial commitments to students have always exceeded the money we have on hand and the funds committed to the program for the upcoming year. (At this point, the HSF has only a single institutional funder, the International Friendship Club in Puerto Vallarta. Thankfully, they have generously renewed their commitment to the HSF each year since 2018.)

Thanks to your continuing generosity we are getting closer to the day when our surplus will cover all our outstanding obligations to HSF recipients. That is important because of the uncertain nature of HSF funding.

Even though we have been very successful in raising funds each year, most of the money coming in is in the precarious form of one-time donations. That means the HSF remains highly vulnerable to a sudden drop in donations because of something like a global economic crisis. (Currently, the financial pages all talk about a major recession in 2023.)

During the past few years, we have tried to reduce the risk built into the HSF funding model by urging repeat donors to shift from occasional one-off donations to regular monthly ones. (Longer-term, regular financial commitments provide some guarantee of future funding, permitting us to plan better.) To date, that initiative has had very modest success. In 2022, regular donors only accounted for \$1860 US, or about 20% of the total we received during the past year.

Please continue to support us as you have in the past. Tell others about the work we do. Consider switching from periodic one-time donations to smaller, but regular monthly donations that help us better plan and maintain a sustainable scholarship program. You can do that here: <https://www.wixarika.org/donate>. Please remember to indicate in the message to vendor box that the funds are for the scholarship program.

If you have connections with corporations, governments or other institutions that might be convinced to support the HSF, please work with us to help make that happen. We currently have only one institutional donor, the International Friendship Club in Puerto Vallarta. We would like to have more.