

“Marshall University has always held a dear place in my heart and in the hearts of my family members. It was thanks to Marshall’s graduate program that my family had the opportunity of coming to the United States 12 years ago with a student Visa, which ultimately led to our citizenship and me coming to the United States about five and a half years ago. That endearment, along with my own desire to grow and spread my wings, led to my decision to choose Marshall,” said Sofia Garcia-Arias, who was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia, prior to moving to Morgantown, West Virginia.

Majoring in biology with a pre-med focus, Sofia is expected to graduate in 2024. She intends to pursue family medicine, but likes that biology is versatile enough that if she chose to specialize in medicine, she would have a well-rounded background.

Sofia is one of seven students that compose the Society of Yeager Scholars Stadelman Family Class of 2024. She is also the recipient of the John Marshall, Honors College and Promise Scholarships.

“When I found out that I received scholarships, I was incredibly grateful. I remember when I got the news that I received the Yeager Scholarship, I screamed and then immediately called my family, both here and in Colombia, to tell them the news. Even my mom cried,” Sofia said. “Scholarships are proof and validations for my efforts during my time in the United States. They are a reminder that every single experience, both good and bad, were worth it.”

Although Sofia thinks fondly of her move from Colombia to the United States, she admits it was hard on a 13-year-old to venture to a new country with her brother, leaving her mother behind. Today, she is amazed by her “resilience and adaptability.” Happy to be a United States citizen, she is thankful her family made the move.



## Fun Facts

**Name:** Sofia Garcia- Arias

**Class of 2024**

**Hometown:** Bogota, Columbia and Morgantown, West Virginia

**Major:** Biology

**Favorite color:** Pastel Rose

**Textbooks or eBooks:** I prefer textbooks.

**Favorite place in Huntington:** I love the Kustom Kreams Ice Cream shop.

“Overnight, I went from living in a Spanish-speaking country, with a temperate climate and only a family of three, to an English-speaking country, in the middle of winter, with a family of six and a pet. Everything was foreign, and I admit it took me some time to adapt to my new life,” Sofia said. “Although Colombia is a beautiful place, opportunities are hard to come by. For those who live there, life can be stagnant, with little chance of growing.”

Sofia’s father and stepmother recall applying to Marshall with the intent of returning to Colombia upon the completion of their degree; however, they decided to stay with a work Visa, then pursued residency, which is when Sofia and her brother came to the United States. They obtained citizenship in 2018.

Sofia hopes to continue broadening her horizons, learning more and growing personally and academically during her time at Marshall. She believes her life experiences make her unique amongst her peers.

“Although I cannot claim to have a life full of hardships or amazing feats, I know that every single experience that has made me who I am is unique to me. My background and my life have provided me insight and wisdom that are different and unique in their own ways, and help me provide a different point of view to the ones around me,” she said.

Excited about living on her own, Sofia believes her greatest challenge as a college student will be adapting to her new environment. She looks forward to growing in the community, and hopes to explore clubs and organizations so that she can become involved on campus. Sofia is thankful for the teachers and individuals who have supported her on her educational journey and the alumni who give back to their alma mater.

“Although the efforts and achievements of alumni are their own, the opportunities they had, and their growth, is ultimately due to the chance that was given to them by being accepted to the university. As I see it, it is a matter of honor and morals to be grateful to the hand that was offered for you.”