As a high school student in Thornton, Colorado, Viviana Andazola Marquez worked hard and aimed high, earning grades that gained her admission to Yale, Harvard, and Princeton. But even after she chose Yale, she worried about the culture—how would a first-generation college student from a family of limited means fit in at an Ivy League school? To ease those concerns, Viviana attended Freshman Scholars at Yale (FSY), a summer program that brings a small cohort of incoming students to campus for a five-week preview of residential college and academic life.

“I think everyone at Yale goes through a case of imposter syndrome, and in FSY they really emphasized that we shouldn’t be confused as to why we’re here,” Viviana says. Through course work, recreational activities, and personalized instruction—ranging from simple lessons on time management to complex conversations about personal challenges—the FSY program, which is welcoming its third group in the summer of 2015, is already known for inspiring both personal confidence and close friendships.

Viviana, who is sampling courses in chemistry, cognitive science, and history, is grateful for her tight-knit group of FSY friends, but she’s also found other companions in her three roommates, her co-writers at Rumpus, and fellow members of MEChA, a Chicano social-justice group. “I like the sense of community here,” she says. “There’s not a lot of division among groups.”

And she attributes FSY with helping her both master the basics—like improving her note-taking skills—and giving her the confidence to take advantage of everything Yale has to offer. “It can be hard to tackle academics if you feel like you don’t belong,” she says. “This program showed us that there’s always someone who’s been there before—and those people are willing to help.”

A robust financial aid program brings exceptional students like Viviana to Yale, regardless of their financial circumstances. To learn more about ways to support these students, please visit giving.yale.edu or call 800.395.7646.