

## Supporting Students in Need

### *Smith Scholarship grows into support network for students*

**F**ERNANDO MEJÍA WAS 17 when an early-morning explosion and fire in his Nicaraguan home orphaned him and burned 85 percent of his body. Mejía says the traumatic event set him on a new path—one leading to America and,

eventually, to UC Santa Cruz. “It made me open my eyes and say, ‘I have to make a difference in my life,’” says Mejía, now 26.

While pursuing a bachelor’s degree in computer science at UCSC, Mejía crossed paths with an alumnus who is also committed to making a difference, especially for students like Mejía—orphans, foster children,

and wards of the court.

In 1999, alumnus Bill Dickinson (Cowell ’68) created the Page and Eloise Pickard Smith Memorial Scholarship, pledging \$100,000 over his lifetime, to honor the founding provost of Cowell College and his wife. A dozen students have each received scholarships ranging from \$2,000 to \$4,000, and for Mejía, the support made the difference.

“The scholarship gave me the last push I needed to finish my degree,” he says.

To ensure that Smith scholarships and fellowships continue well into the future, Dickinson has recently established a planned gift to UCSC, leaving an apartment building and a stock portfolio to the university. “I’m not rich,” Dickinson says. “But like many people, I own real estate. I see this gift as an enduring tribute to the passionate values of two wonderful people who helped pioneer an exceptional university.”

The Smiths gave Dickinson, a former foster child with no home base, a sense of belonging and a daring belief in his own potential—something he is now extending to other students. He has inspired a group of dedicated UCSC alumni, students, and other volunteers to join him in creating the Page and Eloise Smith Scholastic Society. The group provides mentoring as well as monetary support, and is reaching out to younger students in the foster care system to help bring them to higher education.

► **To find out more about the Smith Scholastic Society, contact Matt Henry, Annual Giving Development Office, (831) 459-2031; [mfhenry@cats.ucsc.edu](mailto:mfhenry@cats.ucsc.edu); to find out more about establishing a planned gift to UCSC, contact Ron Suduiko, Vice Chancellor, University Relations, (831) 459-2501; [rsuduiko@cats.ucsc.edu](mailto:rsuduiko@cats.ucsc.edu)**



**Alumnus Bill Dickinson (center, back row) with Smith Scholarship recipients**