

AIDING FUTURE MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

Dr. Katherine Flores of UCSF-Fresno was honored this past April with a \$125,000 Leadership Award from the James Irvine Foundation. Dr. Flores is the director of the Latino Center for Medical Education and Research in Fresno, and her efforts are dedicated to helping prepare students from low-income families for work in the medical field.

In 1999, Dr. Flores established the Doctors Academy. The Academy aids young students through high school and college with tutoring, special classes and invaluable work experience; all of which aims to prepare students for academic success that will lead to fulfilling their aspirations. In addition to academic training, students are also coached in the importance of discipline, community service and self-confidence.

"It is because of the dedication and support of [the staff, partners, mentors, parents and students] that the Doctors Academy is a success

and serves as a model for fostering future healthcare professionals, particularly those who represent the faces of the Valley and who will return to serve area residents," Flores said.

Approximately 50 percent of Fresno County residents are Latino, but only five percent make up the doctors in Fresno County. This number is one of the driving forces behind Dr. Flores' mission to tighten the cultural divide and thus diminish the misunderstanding and cultural language barriers she witnessed while being raised by her Mexican immigrant grandparents.

The personal struggles Dr. Flores endured during her upbringing shaped her vision for what she wanted to do for Valley students who face the same hardships -- and that is exactly what she has done. Each student to go through the Academy has not only graduated high school, but has been accepted to college.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY DR. KATHERINE FLORES

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