



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact:
Rob Veneski
(559) 285-7034

CULTIVATING A NEW CROP OF DOCTORS, HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN RURAL VALLEY COMMUNITIES

Doctors Academy launches for high school students in Selma and Caruthers

FRESNO, Calif. August 22, 2007 – Rural high school students in Fresno County who want to pursue healthcare careers will benefit from a recent \$75,000 Kaiser Permanente community benefit grant to the UCSF Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research.

The start-up monies will fund the development and implementation of a pilot Rural Health Professions Program by expanding the Doctors Academy model to Selma and Caruthers high schools. The Doctors Academy, which is sponsored by the UCSF Fresno Latino Center, is a college-preparatory program for educationally and economically disadvantaged students interested in professional careers in health and medicine. Students in the existing Sunnyside High Doctors Academy are provided campus visits, volunteer and job shadow experiences, summer enrichment programs, individual counseling and mentoring, tutoring, guest speakers and parent enrichment workshops. Students are then encouraged to enroll in college and to a four-year university including California State University, Fresno.

“The Doctors Academy strengthens the educational pipeline of the Valley’s under-represented and minority students,” said Susan Ryan, senior vice president and area manager for Kaiser Permanente’s Fresno service area. Ryan said the Doctors Academy also addresses the shortage of qualified healthcare professionals in the Valley

“This strategy of ‘growing our own’ helps increase the number of students who graduate from high school, college and go on to become competitive applicants for health professional schools,” she said. “Our ultimate hope is that they choose to return to the Valley to practice medicine.”

- more -

“We are grateful to Kaiser Permanente for this generous gift, which allows us to take the Doctors Academy to areas where there is a great need,” said Katherine A. Flores, MD, director of the UCSF Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research. Flores said projections call for a shortage of up to 17,000 physicians in California by 2015. “This helps ensure these students have a solid academic foundation to succeed in college and also to be competitive for health professional schools after they graduate,” she said.

According to Flores, since the inception of the Doctors Academy, 100 percent of its graduates have been accepted into four-year universities, and the majority of these students have declared a major in math, science or health science.

To arrange interviews with representatives from Kaiser Permanente, Doctors Academy, UCSF Fresno, or Selma and Caruthers high school, please contact Rob Veneski at (559) 285-7034.

#