UCSF Fresno and Fresno State honor some of the Valley’s future health care professionals

FRESNO - The University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research (LaCMER) and California State University, Fresno will host their annual recognition ceremony for students in the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) on Friday, May 18th from 4 to 6 p.m., at the University of California Center in Fresno (550 E. Shaw Ave.).

Fourteen students are set to graduate from the program with bachelor’s degrees this year. Eight of them will continue their educations at health professional programs in the fall.

Located on the Fresno State campus, HCOP provides academic and social support services to educationally disadvantaged students who want to pursue careers in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and other allied health professions. The program prepares students to become competitive applicants to health professional schools with the expectation that they will return to the San Joaquin Valley to provide care to the medically underserved.

First-generation college student Carlos Cassillas is among the graduates. Cassillas always dreamed of becoming a doctor. Lacking the role models and support needed to navigate the college-going process, he put his aspirations on hold and went to work full time. Then he discovered HCOP, where he met with advisors and developed a strong network of peers also interested in health and medicine. He received science tutoring and gained local physician Juan Bautista, M.D., a UCSF Fresno faculty member, as a mentor. In addition, Cassillas visited health professional schools and participated in leadership conferences. Thanks to HCOP, this fall, Cassillas will attend the UCLA Geffen School of Medicine, where he will participate in the school’s Program in Medical Education, which prepares physicians to work in urban underserved communities.

HCOP is under the leadership of Katherine A. Flores, M.D., director of the UCSF Fresno LaCMER in partnership with Fresno State HCOP Faculty Advisor Joseph Gandler.

All students will be recognized at the May 18 ceremony.

The following HCOP students in the Class of 2012 will be going on to health professional schools:

- Tigon Abalos – University of California, Los Angeles School of Dentistry
- Carlos Cassillas – University of California, Los Angeles Geffen School of Medicine
- Shereen Dimes – University of Southern California School of Pharmacy
- Cheree Jones – University of California, San Francisco School of Pharmacy
- Anna Koblik – University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine
- James Ros – University of California, San Diego School of Pharmacy
- Michelle Seire – University of California, Irvine School of Medicine Postbaccalaureate Program
- Bessie Yang - Fresno State Master of Public Health degree program

(more)
For more information, please contact Cassandra Gomez, UCSF Fresno LaCMER program coordinator, at (559) 917-9118.

The UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program, established in 1975, plays a substantial role in providing healthcare services to residents of California's San Joaquin Valley and training medical professionals in the region. The medical education program has trained approximately one-third of Central San Joaquin Valley physicians. Annually, UCSF Fresno currently trains approximately 245 medical residents in eight specialties, 45 fellows in 12 subspecialties and about 250 medical students on a rotating basis.

UCSF Fresno faculty and medical residents engage in a broad spectrum of research addressing health issues pertinent to the Valley. UCSF Fresno faculty and residents also care for the overwhelming majority of the region’s underserved populations. In addition, UCSF Fresno provides academic preparation programs for middle- and high school students interested in the health professions through the Doctors Academy and Junior Doctors Academy. UCSF Fresno is a key partner in the UC Merced San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education.

UCSF is a leading university dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. For further information, visit http://www.ucsf.edu

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