Six students with close ties to the San Joaquin Valley are on track to becoming physicians as part of the UC Merced San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education (PRIME). The group, which began their medical studies recently in Sacramento and represents the third cohort in the program, includes:

- Andrew Davoodian, grew up in Turlock and a UC Berkeley graduate
- Muninder Dhaliwal, born and raised in Turlock and a CSU Stanislaus graduate
- Fernando Rios, raised in Winton and a Columbia University graduate
- Miguel Ruvalcaba, raised in Fresno and a UC Merced graduate
- Joseph Trujillo, from Merced, attended Merced College and graduated from UC Davis
- Luisa Fernanda Valenzuela-Riveros, went to high school in Merced, attended Merced College and graduated from UC Davis

Prior to their first day of medical school, the students participated in a service-learning experience in the Valley where they joined senior PRIME medical students to work at a mobile clinic in Caruthers. At the clinic, they helped register patients, took vitals, checked blood sugar levels and served as interpreters while second- and third-year students examined patients. These new physicians-in-training experienced a full range of health-care needs among residents, ranging from important health screenings and chronic disease management to abdominal pain, sore throats and mental health issues. The day encouraged the students to learn and work as a team with more skilled classmates as well as develop the skills needed to reinforce the program’s mission of caring for underserved communities.

UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME combines the strengths and resources of UC Davis School of Medicine, UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program and UC Merced to train physicians interested in practicing in the San Joaquin Valley. Students admitted to PRIME spend
their first two years at the UC Davis campus in Sacramento. The groups’ third and fourth years are spent conducting clinical rotations at San Joaquin Valley clinics and hospitals.

The program represents a cost-effective and expedient way to ramp up medical expertise in the San Joaquin Valley by integrating it with health sciences research to address the unique health in the region.

UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME is the sixth and most recent addition to the University of California’s PRIME. UC Davis, UC Irvine, UCLA, UC San Diego and UC San Francisco also have Programs in Medical Education.

Overall, there are 17 students enrolled in UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME. Each of them has committed to caring for underserved communities in the region or beyond after completing medical school and their subsequent medical residency training.

The program’s inaugural group of medical students is now at UCSF Fresno, where their training includes an integrated six-month clinical course working with physicians in family and community medicine, internal medicine and psychiatry. The training opportunity — known as the Longitudinal Integrated Fresno Education (LIFE) curriculum — enables students to work directly with rural and underserved communities in the San Joaquin Valley.

"The LIFE clerkship is unique because it places students into the exact communities that they hope to serve someday as practicing physicians," said Tonya Fancher, UC Davis associate professor of internal medicine and co-director of San Joaquin Valley-PRIME. “Each day, the SJV PRIME students are inspired by the communities they’re working in and the skilled and compassionate health-care teams that they are learning from. These dedicated students truly reflect the promise of improving health throughout the Valley."

**Media Contact**

[Brandy Nikaido](mailto:Brandy.Nikaido@ucmerced.edu)  
Center Director  
T: 559-241-7512