

Focus on UCSF Fresno

Fall 2022

Teach

Fourth Cohort of Students Starts in UCSF SJV PRIME



SJV PRIME Students

By Barbara Anderson, UCSF Fresno Communications

The [UCSF School of Medicine](#) and [UCSF Fresno](#) welcomed the fourth cohort of the [UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education \(SJV PRIME\)](#). The 12 SJV PRIME students are beginning their medical education at a time when increasing the physician workforce is crucial to meeting the health care needs of the medically under resourced and fast-growing San Joaquin Valley – the region stretching roughly from Bakersfield to Stockton.

The Valley's geographically dispersed and ethnically diverse population greatly outpaces the number of new physicians entering the workforce. With just 47 primary care physicians per 100,000 population, the region falls far short of the 60 to 80 primary care physicians

recommended by the Council of Graduate Medical Education. The Valley is further shy of physicians who represent the communities and who are prepared to address the unique health needs of the region's underserved populations. And this overall lack of access to medical care has never been more glaringly evident than in the past three years, during the pandemic.

Addressing the physician workforce shortage and diversifying the physician ranks are goals of SJV PRIME, a medical school track that is tailored for students from the Valley and who are committed to providing culturally appropriate care, particularly for under resourced communities.

"UCSF Fresno was created in 1975 to improve health access in the San Joaquin Valley. It is clear, however, that improving health requires more than just training physicians in medicine; it requires recruiting students from the region into careers in medicine and giving them the tools to provide care for the diverse population of the Valley. The San Joaquin Valley PRIME is the next step in achieving this goal. The program specifically recruits students with connections to the Valley and from the diverse communities in the Valley. As they complete their medical school, and hopefully specialty training, in the Valley, they will be well-prepared to stay and address the health care needs of our communities," said Michael W. Peterson, MD, MACP, the Y. Frank and Roxie Moradian Chair in Medicine, UCSF Professor of Medicine and UCSF Fresno Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and Research.

The 2022 SJV PRIME cohort has strong connections to the Valley and these exceptional students are passionate about being a part of the mission to ensure high-quality, well-distributed medical care is available to every patient.

"We are so pleased to be welcoming our fourth and incoming class of SJV PRIME students, future physician leaders for the San Joaquin Valley. They come from across the Valley and have close ties to the SJV, most having grown up here. Many of them have firsthand experience of the difficulties that our community members have in accessing health care and they are dedicated to being a force to improve that access for our most underserved," said Loren I. Alving, MD, director of SJV PRIME, health sciences clinical professor in Neurology, and the Mr. and Mrs. David George Row and Stephen W. Rowe Endowed Chair for Teaching in Neurology and director of the UCSF Fresno Alzheimer & Memory Center.

Among the SJV PRIME students in the Matriculating Class of 2022:

Hector Acosta Parra grew up in the agricultural community of Kerman, California. A Kerman High School graduate, he received a bachelor's degree in biology in 2021 from UCLA. The son of Mexican immigrants from Ixtlan Del Rio, Nayarit, his parents "instilled core values, such as hard work, selflessness and kindness in me," Hector says. Like most of his family, his father works as a field worker to help make the Central Valley the most agriculturally rich region in the nation, and at age 15, Hector says, "I also began to work in the fields."

"I witnessed firsthand the health disparities farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley face. Their struggles to receive equitable health care inspired me to pursue a career in medicine and become an advocate for them. Furthermore, the lack of diversity within medicine has motivated me to

pursue a role as a mentor to help other underrepresented minorities become physicians. The goal is to have a more diverse physician workforce that better represents our demographics.”

In the future, Hector hopes to return to the Central Valley to be a physician leader, advocate and mentor for the historically underserved community.

Viangkaeo Lee was born in the Wat Thamkrabok Hmong refugee camp in Thailand. At age seven, she immigrated with her family to Merced, California. Her family was part of the last wave of Hmong refugees to resettle in the United States. For Viangkaeo and her family as Hmong refugees, farm work was the only way to make ends meet. Growing up, she spent weekends at various fields – from Merced to Turlock to Los Banos and Fresno – picking strawberries, tomatoes and figs alongside her parents and siblings.

Growing up in a medically underserved and under resourced area, Viangkaeo witnessed health and health care disparities and inequities at play when she took on the role of caretaker and interpreter for her ailing father, who had end-stage renal disease. The experiences motivated her to pursue medicine to positively impact underserved communities and those often left behind by the health care system. While attending Merced High School, she founded the first pre-medical club on campus to support and encourage students interested in medical fields. Following high school, she attended UC Merced, where she majored in Biological Sciences and in her free time mentored high school students. She also volunteered at the hospital, researching kidney diseases and helped the local Hmong community.

Viangkaeo is excited to be part of SJV PRIME, where she is committed to giving back to and advancing the health of the community that raised her.

Myrka Macedo, a native of Sanger, California, attended schools in Fresno, California, graduating from Edison High School and graduated from Fresno State with a double major in Chemistry and Biology.

Growing up, she helped care for her maternal grandmother and grandfather. Her grandfather had congestive heart failure and later developed cancer and dementia. A native Spanish speaker, Myrka attended doctors’ appointments with her grandparents and provided translation as needed. She also witnessed Katherine Flores, MD, a Latina primary care physician and director of the UCSF Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research (LaCMER), provide holistic care to her grandparents in their native language, making her grandparents feel confident and in control of her grandfather’s afflictions.

Those experiences helped convince Myrka she wanted to be a physician. While preparing to apply to medical school after college graduation, she volunteered at free clinics and then became an emergency support technician at Valley Children’s Hospital. She joined the Central Valley Health Policy Institute in 2021 as a research assistant, working closely with community-based organizations (CBOs) that provide community health workers to the UCSF Fresno Mobile Health COVID-19 Equity Project (CEP). She served for a while as Outreach Director at CEP, providing public health education training in Spanish for the community health workers and helping to

create a public health infographic in Spanish that could be distributed to people coming to CEP for COVID-19 vaccines.

The pandemic exposed the need for collaboration to solve health needs in the Valley, Myrka says. She can envision a future in medicine that includes a public health component. “I learned the importance of working with CBOs and I can see myself working with them in the future as a physician.”

The SJV PRIME matriculating Class of 2022:

Hector Acosta Parra, Kerman, California
Jagot Dosanjh, Fresno, California
Kenneth “Ken” Fox, Fresno
Neytali Kanwar, Fresno
Viangkao Lee, Merced, California
Myrka Macedo, Sanger, California
Austin O’Callaghan Langhoff, Redding, California
Alan Pham, Fresno
Seshaan Ratnam, Fresno
Mina Sarofim, Tracy, California
Maria “Denalene” Tiu, Fresno
Lilian Vang, Fresno

SJV PRIME BACKGROUND:

SJV PRIME started in 2011 as a collaboration among [UC Merced](#), UCSF Fresno, UCSF, and the [UC Davis School of Medicine](#), which was the degree-granting institution. In July 2018, the UCSF School of Medicine became the degree-granting institution.

Students admitted to SJV PRIME spend the first 18 months of medical school in San Francisco then transition to the Fresno regional campus for the remainder of their education. SJV PRIME’s curriculum is tailored to address health issues prevalent in the Valley and encompasses community engagement programs, core seminars, clinical immersion experiences and robust mentorship and support. SJV PRIME incorporates the unique expertise of UCSF, UC Merced and UCSF faculty at UCSF Fresno, as researchers, educators and leaders in the field of health care in the Valley.

Forty-two students are currently enrolled in the UCSF SJV PRIME and three UC Davis students are completing training in SJV PRIME. To date, more than 50 medical school graduates have completed the program, many of whom are now working in the Central Valley and California as residents or fully licensed physicians.

All six of the SJV PRIME students who graduated in 2022 stayed in California for residency training and to provide much needed care. Four stayed in the Central Valley with one staying on at UCSF Fresno.

“The goal is for SJV PRIME students to be able stay in the Valley after graduation by offering them residency training in the Valley with the hope they will stay here to practice,” said Kenny Banh, MD, assistant dean for Undergraduate Medical Education at UCSF Fresno.



A UCSF Fresno Orthopaedic Surgical Oncologist is First in Fresno/Clovis, Providing Local Care for Patients with Bone Cancer

Spencer Woolwine, MD

By Barbara Anderson, UCSF Fresno Communications

Spencer Woolwine, MD, a UCSF Fresno orthopaedic surgical oncologist, is one of a select group of physicians in the nation with expertise in diagnosing and treating tumors of the bones and muscles.

Before he was recruited and hired by [Central California Faculty Medical Group \(CCFMG\)](#), the organization that is responsible for recruiting and hiring UCSF faculty members at the Fresno regional campus, patients in the San Joaquin Valley with bone cancer had to leave the region for care.

Dr. Woolwine is a 2021 graduate of the [UCSF Fresno Orthopaedic Surgery Residency Program](#) and a UCSF assistant clinical professor at UCSF Fresno. He completed a one-year musculoskeletal oncology fellowship at Emory University School of Medicine in Atlanta, Georgia, in 2022. All along, he knew he would be returning to Fresno to provide specialty care.

“I liked the Fresno/Clovis area, but also there was a need for somebody who had an interest like I do in musculoskeletal oncology. And I wanted to really help the families of the Central Valley.”

Dr. Woolwine began seeing bone cancer patients at [University Orthopaedic Associates](#) (UOA) in Clovis in September. UOA is one of CCFMG’s 12 [University Centers of Excellence](#) which are the practice locations (doctors’ offices) managed by CCFMG for UCSF faculty physicians in Fresno and Clovis.

“When you send patients out from Fresno, they’re driving three hours from any direction to get to that specialist,” Dr. Woolwine said. “To tell a family that you have to go to San Francisco for your medical care is one thing, but then you factor in the cost of gas, you factor in the cost of a hotel, and you run the risk of wiping out a family’s savings in just one hospital stay.”

There are a lot of patients in the Valley with oncologic orthopaedic problems, said Uzair Chaudhary, MD, a UCSF professor of clinical medicine at UCSF Fresno who is a board-certified hematologist/medical oncologist and who is medical director of the Community Cancer Institute and Clinical Trial Program. “Before Dr. Woolwine, we did not have an orthopaedic surgical oncologist to take care of these patients, and many of the patients would leave town to get care in the Bay Area or in Southern California,” he said. “Dr. Woolwine has specialized training in taking care of oncological issues and has trained at some of the highest volume surgical centers in the United States. We hope that with Dr. Woolwine’s expertise, patients will not have to leave town and we will be able to take care of them right here in the Central Valley.”

Since opening practice at University Orthopaedic Associates this fall, Dr. Woolwine has treated toddlers to octogenarians. Musculoskeletal cancers can develop in bone throughout the body and affect patients of all ages.

Primary bone cancer – a malignant tumor that develops from the cells of the bone – is rare, accounting for about 0.5% of cancers in the United States, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But primary bone cancer accounts for about 5% of all cancers in children. Dr. Woolwine treats osteosarcoma, seen most often in children and adolescents; chondrosarcoma that develops in cartilage cells and seen most often in adults; and Ewing’s sarcoma, found in bones or soft tissue around bones that typically is seen in children and young adults.

Dr. Woolwine’s practice includes treatment of metastatic bone disease – cancer that originated in another area of the body, such as the breast, lung, thyroid, kidney or prostate and that has spread to bone. Treatment for metastatic bone disease is determined by the location of the cancer in the body and how it is affecting the patient. For example, when breast cancer metastasizes, it commonly spreads to the spine or goes to the hip. With metastatic bone disease, the cancer can weaken bone so significantly that a fracture can occur from something as simple as standing up from a chair.

Treatment for metastatic bone disease often involves collaboration with radiation and medical oncologists among others. Dr. Woolwine appreciates a whole team effort for a patient. “I am here, and the medical oncologists and radiation oncologists are here. We don’t have to send

anybody out. We can keep everybody here; we can treat them just as well as they can treat them anywhere else,” he said.

“Dr. Woolwine’s expertise is greatly needed for our oncology patients in the Central Valley,” said Constance Stoehr, MD, a UCSF assistant clinical professor at the regional campus in Fresno, and who is board certified in Internal Medicine and Medical Oncology. “Many breast cancer patients will suffer from bone involvement that may require orthopaedic intervention. I’m glad that Dr. Woolwine has joined UCSF Fresno and can help improve the quality of life of these patients.”

The importance of collegiality in his medical career guided Dr. Woolwine’s decision to choose UCSF Fresno for orthopaedic surgery residency. He ranked the UCSF Fresno program high for its collaborative and family atmosphere. “Everybody seemed to work very well together,” he said. “It was just a place where I wanted to be.”

He credits coincidence, however, for developing an early interest in musculoskeletal oncology. In his last year of medical school at UC Irvine, he had the opportunity to visit three different orthopaedic surgery residency programs, and he was placed on the musculoskeletal oncology service at each month-long rotation, which is unheard of. “I was put on the exact same specialty at every spot, without me even asking. So, I saw three months of this type of surgery, and up to that point, I had had no clue that it was even a specialty.”

And Dr. Woolwine’s path to medical school is a serendipitous story of its own.

In college, he wanted to be an FBI or CIA agent. In the first years of medical school, he saw himself becoming a physician for a professional sports team.

As odd as it sounds, both aspirations – spy and doctor to star athletes – made sense at the time. At Occidental College, a liberal arts school in Los Angeles, he graduated with a major in Diplomacy and World Affairs with a specialization in counterterrorism and bioterrorism. He thought he would follow in the footsteps of his grandfather, who had been a special agent with the U.S. Department of Defense. But medicine provided for a less restrictive life from one in espionage. Orthopaedic surgery appealed because he had developed an interest in biomechanics and anatomy of the muscular skeletal system from years of playing sports. Growing up in Winter Park, Colorado, a small ski town of 300 to 400 people, he skied competitively until age 16. And after high school, he played college baseball. Sports medicine would have been a natural fit.

But as an orthopaedic surgeon, he found repairing a tennis player’s torn rotator cuff or reconstructing an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) gave less satisfaction than performing surgery to relieve pain from bone cancer. “I feel I am contributing a lot more to a patient’s care when I’m treating a cancer patient,” he said.

Helping cancer patients have a better quality of life is gratifying, but Dr. Woolwine said some days are difficult to not bring the weightiness of the job home. He has a daughter, who is five. She and her mother are supportive while also keeping him grounded. “They understand if it was

a good day and I want to talk about it, 'perfect.' If not, they're OK with 'what's for dinner or let's jump in the pool.'"

He gets energy from teaching residents in the UCSF Fresno Orthopaedic Surgery Residency Program. "They keep you on your toes." And he also enjoys being around residents. "I think we're very good at picking special people who are able to fit in well. They get along with everybody. They all have the same work ethic. And they are just overall good people to work with." Also, he said, "it sounds strange, but it gets lonely when you are out kind of on your own. It's nice to have the whole team camaraderie."

Dr. Woolwine has a passion for teaching. "I feel that there is a huge duty for people to go back and teach, regardless of whatever it is they do, because we have to continue to pass on all this knowledge as people graduate through and advance in their own careers."

At the UCSF Fresno Orthopaedic Surgery Program, Dr. Woolwine hopes to train residents who will be comfortable looking at bone cancer imaging, diagnosing bone cancer and talking to patients about treatment options. "I have had a patient who had seen several surgeons before me and they were not comfortable with looking at her X-rays and evaluating her and her symptoms," he said. "And then you dig a little deeper and you look at the X-rays and you notice something is not right. Had the patient not seen him, he said, "I wonder how long this would have gone undiagnosed and spread to even more parts of the body."

When he is not seeing patients at University Orthopaedic Associates or teaching residents at UCSF Fresno, Dr. Woolwine enjoys golfing and going to the gym. His parents live only a couple of hours away in Monterey, California, and he visits about once a month. Fresno is home, he said. "I see myself being here for a long time."

Research

UCSF Fresno Participating in Worldwide Study of Potential Treatment for Chronic, Painful Skin Disease



Gregory Simpson, MD, and Luis Dehesa, MD

By Barbara Anderson, UCSF Fresno Communications

UCSF Fresno is preparing to enroll participants in a worldwide study to evaluate a potential new treatment for hidradenitis suppurativa (HS), a chronic, inflammatory skin disease that is very painful and has no cure. Patients are being enrolled at [University Dermatology Associates](#) in Fresno.

HS can be devastating and debilitating. Boil-like abscesses develop in areas where skin rubs together, such as under armpits, on inner thighs, the groin, buttocks and under breasts. Some cases are mild, but in severe cases, lesions can rupture and drain pus with an odor. The abscesses can leave scars.

The condition, which is not contagious, tends to first manifest in teenagers and young adults. There is no known cause, but a genetic predisposition is suspected, and cigarette smoking and excess weight are possible factors. The condition can last for years and worsen over time and lead to complications, including impairing mobility. “We’ll see people in wheelchairs because they cannot walk or move,” said Gregory Simpson, MD, a UCSF Fresno dermatologist and UCSF professor.

Presently, treatment for HS varies – from topical medications, antibiotics, to cortosteroid injections, laser treatments and surgery – based on the severity of the condition. Anti-tumor necrosis factor (TNF) therapy has offered some clinical benefit but has not been helpful to all HS patients.

“We have been attacking HS in so many different ways, and nothing really works that well so far,” said Dr. Simpson. He and colleague Luis Dehesa, UCSF Fresno dermatologist and UCSF associate clinical professor, are co-principal investigators at the UCSF Fresno site of a phase 2, multi-center, randomized, double-blind controlled study to evaluate the safety of lutikizumab, an

interleukin-1 blocker, in adults with moderate to severe HS who have failed anti-tumor necrosis factor (Anti-TNF) therapy.

“HS looks like an acne-based problem, but it is really an inflammatory problem and this medication (lutikizumab) blocks one of the inflammatory pathways,” Dr. Simpson said. “We are hopeful it will prevent big abscesses from forming in the first place.”

UCSF Fresno is among 50 sites worldwide for the study to compare lutikizumab to a placebo. Participants will receive a subcutaneous injection of lutikizumab or a placebo every week for 16 weeks. The study is sponsored by AbbVie, a research-based global pharmaceutical company.

Research is an integral part of UCSF Fresno’s mission to improve health in the San Joaquin Valley. The HS clinical trial is one of the latest for the Division of Dermatology in the UCSF Fresno Department of Internal Medicine. Drs. Dehesa and Simpson have participated in clinical trials of medications for atopic dermatitis that have led to new medications being approved for use in recent years by the FDA, for example.

Drs. Dehesa and Simpson are hopeful the HS clinical trial will similarly result in an effective therapy for HS patients. “HS affects quality of life and we don’t have a good medication to control it,” Dr. Dehesa said. “We are looking for a better alternative and hopefully we will find something that really works. These are patients who need more help.”



UCSF Fresno Named One of Four Regional Hubs in California to Build Pathway for Community College Students to the Medical Field

By Brandy Ramos Nikaido, UCSF Fresno Communications

In June 2022, the [California Medicine Scholars Program](#) (CMSP) launched as part of a statewide strategy and investment by the Department of Health Care Access and Information to strengthen the California community college to medical school pathway. As its first established action, CMSP, housed at the Foundation for California Community Colleges, awarded funds to four recipients to establish [Regional Hubs of Healthcare Opportunity](#) (RHHOs). The RHHOs will bridge gaps between community colleges, four-year universities, medical schools, and community-based health clinics and organizations to provide greater pre-medical opportunities for students and help diversify California's primary care physician workforce.

The four awards were made to:

- UCSF Fresno, a regional campus of the UCSF School of Medicine
- UC Davis School of Medicine
- UC Riverside School of Medicine, and
- UC San Diego School of Medicine

All hubs reside in regions underserved in health care and are currently experiencing a physician shortage. Each grantee will receive \$1.6 million for the first three years (\$540,000 annually) with additional funding (\$250,000) available in the fourth year for sustainability. Funding will support the creation of RHHOs and provide a strategy to increase the number of underrepresented minority physicians and ultimately reduce disparities in health and health outcomes across the state.

UCSF Fresno is the lead agency for the San Joaquin Valley Regional Hub of Healthcare Opportunity (SJV-RHHO). The SJV-RHHO, which launched July 1, 2022, creates the first pre-medical diversity pathway from community college to primary care physician program in the [San Joaquin Valley known as the California Medicine Scholars Program](#) (SJV-CMSP).

“The vision of the SJV-CMSP is to increase the numbers of underrepresented minority physicians through a collaborative partnership effort. This program fulfills a need in the pathway to practicing physician at the community college level,” said Kenny Banh, MD, assistant dean for Undergraduate Medical Education at UCSF Fresno. “The mission specifically is to increase the number of regional community college students who transfer to and are accepted into medical schools from California State University, Fresno.”

In addition to UCSF Fresno, SJV-CMSP partners include:

- [California Health Sciences University](#)
- [Fresno State](#)
- [State Center Community College District](#) (Fresno City College, Clovis Community College, Madera/Oakhurst Community College, Reedley Community College)
- [College of the Sequoias](#) (Hanford, Tulare and Visalia campuses)
- [Merced Community College District](#) (Merced and Los Banos campuses)
- [West Hills Community College District](#) (Coalinga, Firebaugh and Lemoore campuses)
- [Yosemite Community College District](#) (Columbia College and Modesto Junior College)

- [California Area Health Education Center Program](#)
- [Central Valley Health Network](#), and
- [Valley Health Team Family Residency Medicine Program](#).

Students applying to the SJV-CMSP must be on track to complete at least 22 credits at their community college, plan on applying to Fresno State the following academic year, come from an economically or educationally disadvantaged background; have an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher (transcripts must be submitted); provide a personal statement and letter of recommendation as well as take part in a personal interview and demonstrate a commitment to participate in SJV-CMSP activities to pursue a career as a physician.

The selection process into SJV-CMSP will be completed by a local committee. Selected students will be provided with academic support through advising from the identified pre-health college advisors at all partner colleges, starting with the community college and then transitioning to advising by Fresno State faculty as well as other enrichment opportunities such as conferences, academic skills workshops, medical school application workshops, mentoring and clinical experiences with a special focus on facilitating student matriculation and preparedness for medical school.

UCSF Fresno already implements several programs aimed at inspiring, informing, and academically preparing students, especially those from underrepresented backgrounds for careers in health and medicine. These include the highly successful [Doctors Academy programs](#) at Caruthers and Sunnyside high schools in Caruthers Unified School District and Fresno Unified School District respectively; the [Summer Biomedical Internship Program](#); Mini-Medical School and Reaching Out to Aspiring Doctors for the San Joaquin Valley among other programs.

“Developing a high-quality undergraduate medical education program and the foundation for a future medical school requires that enough qualified students from the region are available to be recruited to the program,” said Michael W. Peterson, MD, associate dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and Research at UCSF Fresno. “Improving efficiencies and developing financial sustainability of pathway programs are essential to continue the tremendous momentum and success we have accomplished to date with programs like the Doctors Academy built by our very own Katherine A. Flores, MD, and to expand to serve community college students with the SJV-CMSP.”

To better coordinate and increase the success of existing pathway programs, SJV-CMSP and future programs, Associate Dean Peterson and Assistant Dean Kenny Banh, MD, announced that UCSF Fresno created an [Office of Health Career Pathways](#) within the Department of Undergraduate Medical Education. Emy Lopez Phillips, EdD, has been appointed as the inaugural Director. Dr. Lopez Phillips will oversee the SJV-CMSP and provide administrative oversight to all UCSF Fresno pathway programs. Her responsibilities will include budget development, fiscal management, coordination of student volunteer experiences, representing UCSF Fresno to community-based organizations and educational institutions and districts to support health and medical educational career opportunities for students.

“I am honored to build upon the success of existing programs and launch new ones like the San Joaquin Valley California Medicine Scholars Program that will expand access to careers in health and medicine for community college students,” said Dr. Lopez Phillips. “The young people in our Valley are full of hope and resilience. Many have a strong desire to give back to their communities and break the cycle of poverty within their families. This is an exciting time as we at UCSF Fresno along with our partners have an opportunity to help lift and mentor the next generation.”

Inspire

UCSF Fresno People Spotlight



Marcus Cummins and sons

UCSF Fresno’s success and growth are a direct result of the dedication and inspiration of our faculty, staff, residents, fellows, students, alumni, partners, donors and friends. In each issue of Focus, we introduce you to the people who contribute to the greatness of UCSF Fresno through informal interviews.

This month, please meet Marcus Cummins, UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education (SJV PRIME) student.

What is your name? Nickname?

Marcus Cummins. Most of my family calls me Marc.

What is your hometown? Where did you go to school? High School? Undergrad?

I was born and raised in Clovis, California. I went to Buchanan High School and UC Davis.

Where are you in your medical student training? What Foundation? What rotation? What clinical site or sites?

I am a fourth-year student in the UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education. Currently, I am on my dedicated research time. We have up to 20 weeks of dedicated research time during our fourth year at UCSF to design and carry out a project with a mentor of our choosing. I am working with UCSF Fresno Associate Dean Michael W. Peterson, MD, on a project related to valley fever.

Why did you apply to SJV PRIME?

Despite growing up in the Valley, I was unaware of the tremendous need for physicians and the consequences it has on our residents. When I learned about the physician shortage in the Valley while applying to medical school, I felt that it was my duty to return to the region to serve my community and be a part of enhancing our physician workforce moving forward.

Why did you decide to become a physician?

I was drawn to the challenge and the unique opportunity to combine a strong understanding of medicine and science with the importance of really getting to know people and their stories. A career as a physician also provides a chance to have a significant impact on people from all walks of life.

What areas of medicine are of special interest to you? What rotations have you enjoyed most?

I really enjoyed my Internal Medicine rotations in my third and fourth years, as well as my ICU (intensive care unit) rotation. I am currently applying to Internal Medicine residency and am considering a Pulmonary and Critical Care fellowship after residency.

What is at the top of your professional to-do list right now?

Finishing medical school is at the top of my list. It's a long journey and while long-term goals are important, I also think it's important to have practical and attainable short-term goals.

What advice do you have for students who are interested in becoming doctors?

Be patient, be persistent, and try not to compare yourself to others. Prioritize being the best version of yourself every day and eventually doors will open.

The zombie apocalypse is coming. Which three people from UCSF Fresno would you pick to be on your team and why?

Kenny Banh, MD, is on my list because there is nothing he can't do. My classmate Alex Alejandre also is on the list because I think his military background would come in handy and he has a great sense of humor. I would also bring Rameen Atefi, DO, who was my senior resident during my fourth-year Internal Medicine rotation. Like Dr. Banh, he strikes me as a jack-of-all-trades and would provide endless moral support in the face of disaster.

What do you like to do in your off time?

I spend time with my wife and kids, run, and watch football, golf, major championship tennis, and cooking shows.

What is the most important thing you would like people to know about you? Or what else would you like to add about you, your background, family or career?

My wife and I have three young boys (3 ½, 2, and 5 months). We were cautioned about starting a family before or during medical school. While it isn't easy, if you have a family or are thinking of starting one and have the right support system around you, it is certainly possible. My wife is phenomenal and carries a great majority of the load and we are lucky to have plenty of family nearby to make it possible.

[Print Newsletter](#)



Commander Vernon Schmidt presents check for the Ron Naggar, MD, Scholarship Fund for SJV PRIME students

Scholarships Fuel the Future of Medical Education for Valley Students

By Kathleen Smith, Development and Alumni Relations, UCSF Fresno

The UCSF School of Medicine's San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education (SJV PRIME) seeks to recruit and train future physicians to address the unique health needs of the region's diverse and underserved populations. Students admitted to the program currently spend their first 18 months of medical school in San Francisco, then transition to the Fresno regional campus for the remainder of their education. SJV PRIME incorporates the unique expertise of UCSF, UC Merced, and UCSF faculty at UCSF Fresno, as researchers, educators and leaders in the field of health care in the Valley with a curriculum tailored to address health issues prevalent in the Valley.

All SJV PRIME medical students come from or possess close ties to the Valley and are particularly motivated to ensure that high-quality, comprehensive, and well-distributed medical care is available to improve the health of populations, communities and individuals in the San Joaquin Valley. SJV PRIME helps us "grow our own" by training students from the Valley, in the Valley, and for the Valley.

We want our graduates to have the financial freedom to pursue their passions, yet most students who aspire to become physicians through SJV PRIME lack the financial means to do so. Student scholarships are crucial to ensuring that the brightest, most diverse, and most public service-minded students can attend UCSF and graduate from SJV PRIME with minimal debt. Establishing a new scholarship or giving to one that already exists makes a difference in the life of a talented, purpose driven student who shares UCSF Fresno's mission and culture of innovation, service, compassion, and collaboration.

Grateful for their own careers in health care, Carl and Lulu Mitchell made a generous gift to the SJV PRIME Scholarship Fund through the Carl and Lulu Mitchell Family Foundation, which focuses on supporting health care and education initiatives. Carl and Lulu have a heartfelt commitment to help our students – many of whom come from communities that have been historically excluded from medicine – afford the world-class medical education UCSF offers.

A generous gift from the American Ex-Prisoners of War Fresno Chapter #1 established the Ron Naggar, MD, Scholarship Fund for SJV PRIME students who are active military or military veterans. Commander Vernon Schmidt and the members of the Ex-POWs created this scholarship as a lasting tribute to the late Dr. Naggar – a UCSF faculty member for over 30 years – for his lifetime of healing and compassionate care of local ex-POWs and their families.

We are grateful to these community members and their support that helps ensure that the highest-quality medical education remains accessible to the most exceptional Valley students who mirror the diversity of the communities they will one day serve. To learn more about how your gift to UCSF Fresno can help us continue the important work of educating the next generation of

physicians for the Valley, contact Kathleen Smith, assistant director of development at kathleen.smith@ucsf.edu or (559) 499-6426.

Kudos

UCSF Fresno Recognition



Danielle Campagne, MD, FACEP

Congratulations to **Danielle Campagne, MD, FACEP**, who was named interim Chief of the Department of Emergency Medicine at UCSF Fresno and interim Vice-Chair of Emergency Medicine at UCSF School of Medicine. Dr. Campagne takes over for Jim Comes, MD, FACEP, who stepped down after having served tirelessly as Chief since 2017. Congratulations and thank you to Dr. Campagne for assuming this important role while a nationwide search for a permanent chief is conducted. We are extremely grateful for and proud of Drs. Comes and Campagne.



Kudos to **Teresa Daniele, MD**, who was voted in as the President for the California Chapter of the American College of Cardiology.



Kudos to **Marina Roytman, MD**, who was voted in as President for the Fresno Madera Medical Society, a society that has played a vital role in representing the Central Valley region. Her one-year term starts January 2023. Dr. Roytman takes over for John Moua, MD, who currently serves as president of the FMMS.



Kudos to **Gregory Simpson, MD**, who was voted in as Treasurer of the Fresno Madera Medical Society.



Congratulations to **Kenny Banh, MD**, who received the Public Service Award from the Fresno Madera Medical Society for UCSF Fresno Mobile HeaL's service to the community.

Congratulations to **Carolyn Chooljian, MD; Anil Ghimire, MD; Andrea "Drea" Long, MD, FACS; Jeffrey Nahn, MD; Christine Nelson, MD; Chokechai Rongkavilit, MD; and Crystal Ives Tallman, MD**; for receiving Excellence in Teaching Awards from the UCSF School of Medicine Academy of Medical Educators. Excellence in Teaching Awards are peer-nominated awards that highlight outstanding frontline teachers of learners at all UCSF teaching sites, including the Fresno regional campus.



Congrats to **Susanne Spano, MD**, for receiving the Paul S. Auerbach, MD, Award from the Wilderness Medicine Society. The award is given to a physician or PhD in recognition of sustained significant clinical or service contribution to Wilderness Medicine and/or scientific achievement in Wilderness Medicine in combination with service to the Society.



Congrats and thank you to **Leigh Ann O'Banion, MD**, for being selected as the newest coach for UCSF San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education. As a coach, Dr. O'Banion will mentor SJV PRIME students. She joins current SJV PRIME coaches **Richard Kiel, MD; Lily Hitchner, MD; and Motasem Refaat, MD.**

Kudos to **Serena Loya, MS**, who was elected as a member of the Alliance for Academic Internal Medicine council group and has been nominated for Treasurer.

Kudos to **Ariana Zaghmouri** and **Sydney Rusconi**. Both were awarded the Jaclyne Witte Boyden Staff Award from the Haile T. Debas Academy of Medical Educators at UCSF. This award recognizes exceptional staff members for outstanding contributions across all health professions schools at UCSF.

Congratulations to the following for earning SPOT Awards. These awards recognize significant employee achievements and contributions, as they occur, for a specific project or task over a short period of time **Barbara Anderson, Nicholas Dennie, Paula Der Matoian, Francis Fung, Vanessa Gonzalez, Michelle Horwege, Tanya Martinez, Joseph Mosholder, Maria Munoz, Jeannette Naranjo, Nancy Oloizia and Tiffany Robinson**