Message from the Director

This year has been simply amazing!

UC San Diego PRIME-HEq hosted the 5th Annual UC PRIME Statewide Conference in October, with a conference theme of Partnering Together for Health Equity. The conference was very well attended with over 150 participants. Attendees consisted of PRIME directors, administrators, and students. We had the opportunity to share ideas and best practices through workshops, poster sessions, and small group discussions, all with the goal of promoting health equity. We look forward to meeting again in the fall at UC Irvine.

Our PRIME-HEq community continues to grow, and we have been busier than ever. One of our PRIME-HEq students was integral in the development of our new Diversity in Medicine Lecture Series. We have had two events so far, both of which were very successful. Two students were the recent recipients of the United States Public Health Service 2014 Excellence in Public Health Awards, for the work that they did in rejuvenating our Border Health Project. We held our very first PRIME-HEq student retreat in February at The La Jolla Shores Hotel, where the students and PRIME-HEq alumni had an opportunity to brainstorm about the future direction of PRIME-HEq. It was wonderful to see them display such leadership!

We are very proud of all of our PRIME-HEq students, and their ongoing commitment to the issues that plague our disenfranchised communities. We will miss our outgoing cohort, but know that they will continue to do the work about which they are so passionate. This year we are fortunate that all of the students in our 3rd PRIME-HEq graduating cohort will be training in California! As in past years, the majority will be training in primary care specialties. We look forward to welcoming in our new cohort of ten talented and passionate students this fall.

Wishing you all a happy spring!

Lindia Willies-Jacobo, MD, PRIME-HEq Director
By Damilola Soyode (MSII)

As we progress through our journeys to becoming physicians focused on addressing the needs of underserved communities it is easy to get lost in the daily requirements of medical school. That is why the annual statewide conference always serves as an exciting, inspiring and refreshing reminder of why we have chosen the path we now walk. The 5th annual UC PRIME Conference at UCSD was no exception.

The theme of the conference, Partnering Together For Health Equity, was chosen to highlight the importance of partnerships in the success of UC PRIME. At the campus level, the growth and energy of each program rests heavily on the ability of students and faculty to work together for a common goal. At a local level there is also the added interaction of forming partnerships with local communities to create sustainable initiatives and avenues for empowerment. At a statewide level, the statewide council acts as the voices of each program. However, the annual conference is the only venue that allows members of each school to come together, share ideas, learn and develop cross-campus partnerships.

In preparation for the Conference several committees of current students were set up. I volunteered to be a part of the Committee for Workshops. Our goals for each workshop were to ensure each session was practical, offer skills valuable for attendees and align with the theme of the conference. In addition, we sought to partner with other PRIME campuses by inviting them to run their own workshops. I particularly wanted to partner with one of the local communities in San Diego, which I felt that students did not have as much interaction with. Therefore I worked with Dr. Kate Murray, who works closely with refugee communities in San Diego, to develop a workshop that would introduce attendees to the issues faced by the community as well as provide practical solutions.

There were many individuals who came together to make the conference a success, from staff to medical and post-baccalaureate students. These same individuals have also kept the momentum from the conference.
There were numerous workshops devoted to the development, promotion and improvement of community based programs and health systems. The workshop on *Health Frontiers in Tijuana* touched on the challenges and methods of developing a bi-national student-run free clinic. Mobile phones are becoming an increasingly useful tool in all aspects of daily life and health care is no exception. Antonio Moya created a forum to discuss *mHealth and Health Information Systems* as potential tools for addressing healthcare disparities drawing from current interventions being used globally. He also ran a second workshop together with Angelico Razon focused on developing partnerships to increase the success of pipeline programs.

Physicians are often prone to neglecting their personal health and occasionally professional development. Daniel Woolridge’s workshop on *Staying Mindful in Medicine* provided strategies for physicians to combat stress. There were also panelists for Masters and Residency programs providing invaluable insight into the process of applications, finding careers and the utility of a masters degree in a medical career.

The conference would not have been complete without workshops and events centered on partnering with the community. These ranged from learning how to effectively utilize interpreter services to using media as a unique tool for advocacy. San Diego has a sizeable refugee community with significant health challenges. Dr. Kate Murray and Godeliève Louis’ workshop on refugee resettlement in the US provided both unique issues into the community and actionable solutions to the disparities. The conference also hosted a number of guest speakers from the San Diego community who are dedicated to and actively engaged in addressing the issue of health equity at local, national and international levels.

Already at UCSD many ideas that were conceptualized during the conference have already begun to be developed and implemented on campus. It will be interesting to watch as various partnerships grow, as ideas come to fruition and as UC PRIME continues to impact and change the face of health disparities at multiple levels.
By TC Robbins (MSII)

On Saturday, November 9, 2013, UCSD medical students, pharmacy students, undergraduates, interpreters, physicians and pharmacists traveled over 50 miles to the farms outside of Fallbrook, CA to increase access to health services for one of the most underserved and marginalized populations in San Diego county: migrant farmworkers. The health fair was organized by the Border Health Project, a student-run organization at UCSD’s School of Medicine.

The Border Health Project was founded in 2006 under the principle that everyone deserves access to basic health services and resources. Although the group had been inactive in recent years, second-year PRIME-Health Equity medical students TC Robbins and Rene Garcia collaborated with volunteer faculty member Dr. Miguel Casillas, original BHP founder Dr. Shirin Alonzo, pharmacist Dr. Eduardo Fricovksy, PRIME-HEq coordinator Katherine Garcia, and staff members and health educators from Vista Community Clinic, to revive the project this fall.

Migrant workers living in San Diego face many challenges in accessing medical care, including lack of transportation, financial barriers, and fear of deportation. On November 9, 2013, 58 workers and their family members attended the BHP health fair to be screened for high blood glucose, high cholesterol, high BMI and hypertension. The workers were then guided to health education tables to learn more from medical students about topics that were personally relevant to them, including hypertension, diabetes, hyperlipidemia, occupational health, and sexual health. 34 of the workers received flu vaccines.
Ten patients were identified as “high-risk” based on their screening values or acute problems. They were seen by volunteer doctors and were then referred to Vista Community Clinic staff who made them appointments for the following week. The attendees were also given reusable bags with toothbrushes, toothpaste, condoms, mouthwash, deodorant, working gloves, socks, and first-aid kits, in addition to clothing from UCSD’s student-run clothing drive.

The second BHP health fair was held on March 29, 2014. Support for the Border Health Project is provided by the PACE Program Underserved Community Grant, PRIME-Health Equity, the UCSD Office of Student Affairs, Planned Parenthood of the Pacific Southwest, UCSD Health Sciences, community dentists, and many other donors. If you are interested in learning more about BHP, please contact tcrobbins3@gmail.com or grc.rene@gmail.com.
By Carina Lopez (MSIV)

"So, what classes do I have to take to become a Pediatrician?" A young Latina in the 3rd grade asked us that question in between the other very well informed questions being asked by inquisitive mothers and soon to be college students. The room was filled with enthusiasm and curiosity, in part from parents and from the youth who had a vision, who had hopes for a better future.

Adelante Mujer, now in its 21st year, is a conference that grew from the vision of high school teachers who wanted to empower young Latina's and inspire them to create a dream and a vision. One of our graduating LMSAer’s father was a supporter of the conference from its inception. This conference takes place every year in South San Diego and targets Latina youth. LMSA at UCSD hosted a “Your path to medical school” workshop. UCSD medical students: Vicki Chia, Carina Lopez, Viri Tapia, Silvia Fonseca and Diana Garcia shared stories of their journey to medical school along with challenges they faced in achieving their dream. “It is our obligation, our sense of duty to give back to our communities and to empower our youth to dream, a dream that they can smell, taste, touch and see. We want to inspire them to take that dream and nurture it and so that eventually the can see it into fruition”, stated Carina, who has been organizing LMSA’s participation in this conference. LMSA is looking forward to participating in this panel next year. We hope to make this a long standing tradition.

For more information please contact Katherine Garcia at k2garcia@ucsd.edu

For 20 years, the annual Adelante Mujer Conference has been aimed at providing Southbay San Diego female students and their mothers with enriching learning experience. Participants attend workshops led by female professionals who teach about life skills, academic planning, and career opportunities in fields, such as law, business, media, and engineering.
During the PRIME-HEq orientation of August 2013, I and three other students hosted a session on Diversity in Medicine. At the start of the session, I posed the all too familiar question: “What is Diversity? And what does it mean to you?” Expecting to hear a variety of answers that included the keywords “inclusion,” “progressive,” or even “multicultural pluralism” I called on one of the first years. He replied to my question with an unflinching earnestness: “I don’t know what Diversity is and what it means.” At this remark I was confused and a bit flabbergasted, but I continued to listen, waiting for his response to change to what I would have expected, “Diversity is a word that I keep hearing more and more these days. Organizations and groups continue to mention it, but I honestly don’t know what it actually means today.” As soon as he finished, I understood what he meant, and I began to ponder myself.

Diversity may connote inclusion, progressiveness, and multicultural plurality but it is an ever-evolving principle that means something much more than what it once did even a decade ago. Through the creation of the Diversity in Medicine Lecture Series at UCSD’s School of Medicine, that evolution is what we hope to explore. Due to the growing heterogeneity of our country and of the human experience, medicine should be one of the disciplines at the forefront of representing what physicians will be seeing in their offices every day. In order to create the representative physicians that we need, the first thing is for the academy to celebrate how far we have come in medical education, and thereby create an example for students and future doctors to follow.

Our first example came in the form of Dr. David Pride, MD PhD, Director of the Molecular Microbiology Laboratory at UC San Diego. From listening to Dr. Pride describe his journey into medicine and the sacrifices he made coming from a single-parent household in an impoverished community in Tennessee, I recognized that even though we are both African Americans males, and even though he and others like him have paved the way for students like myself to be successful, our experiences growing up were incredibly different. But although our experiences were different, in order to keep pace with the diversity of potential patients, it is my responsibility to be sensitive to people coming from my background as well as Dr. Pride’s. And by modeling his example, the hope is that my generation and those coming after will expand the boundaries of what diversity will mean tomorrow.
So I packed my bags and decided, I was going home. Home in the sense that I was finally getting a chance to go somewhere on the continent: I was last in Nigeria and South Africa four years prior to this visit to Ghana. My sole purpose of participating in the elective with the Department of Surgery was to gain a further understanding of how quality surgical care is delivered in resource-limited settings. As a graduating 4th year medical student, every disease process is synonymous with ordering an additional test to improve your diagnosis but at times we order unnecessary tests solely for academic purposes. Given how much we waste in our health-system I feel that a global sense of the limited availability of resources can only improve own ability to reduce healthcare expenditures as we grapple with healthcare reform in the United States.

Given my interest in surgical oncology. I was placed on the oncology ward, which is primarily managed by the surgeons. The cases were very difficult. Almost everyone we took care of had terminal stage disease. At one point I remarked, “Every epigastric hernia has cancer until proven otherwise”. What could we do to prevent cancer? Does the incidence justify the cost of massive campaigns and screening colonoscopies? Is cancer a neglected disease, as we have not finished tackling HIV/TB. These questions clouded my thoughts as I tried to grasp where to begin to understand the burden of cancer I saw on the ward. Even when patients had operations for cancer i.e the mastectomy for breast cancer, there was limited opportunity for reconstruction. In fact some women may chose not to proceed with treatment because of the concern of disfigurement and humiliation.

Leaving Korlebu was probably harder than being there. As a first generation immigrant to the United States from Nigeria, I always feel at home whenever I work or travel within Sub-Saharan Africa. The faculty, residents and staff were very welcoming which took me a bit by surprise. As a diaspora African I vehemently believe that we need to be more engaged in improving healthcare systems in our home countries. This experience renewed my commitment to improving access to quality surgical care in Sub-Saharan Africa.
"I have spent the year completing my MPH at Harvard in the Health and Social Behavior concentration. Most of my classes and projects have centered on the concepts of behavior change, both for improving individual health behaviors and for transforming healthcare delivery. Recognizing the challenges of individual behavior change, I have been most inspired by the idea of making our environments healthier (through policy and design) so that the healthy choices are the easy choices. I had the wonderful opportunity to go to India during winter session for a class to study how these concepts are playing out in relation to non-communicable diseases (such as cancer and heart disease). Traveling in India has long been a goal of mine and getting to see parts of the country through a public health lens was an incredible experience!"

- Ashlin Mountjoy, Harvard University
In Memorium

This year we lost a big champion of diversity at the School of Medicine. Percy J. Russell, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Biology passed away on January 30, 2014 in his home in Del Mar. He was 87 years old.

Dr. Russell was born May 29, 1926 in New York City, NY. He graduated in 1950 with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from College of the City of New York; received a Master’s of Arts degree in organic chemistry from Brooklyn College in 1955 and a doctorate in biochemistry from Western Reserve University (now Case Western Reserve University) in 1959.

Dr. Russell joined the UC San Diego Department of Biology faculty in 1969 and spent the next 22 years (he retired in 1991) conducting basic research, but also devoting much time and attention to teaching undergraduate and medical school students – and working to increase diversity on campus and in laboratories. Specifically, he was an influential force on four programs:

UC San Diego’s Cancer Center Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences, an on-going program in which eight to 10 freshmen, sophomores and community college transfer students from underserved populations receive eight weeks of summer laboratory and classroom training in the biomedical and behavioral sciences, followed by participation in the laboratories of UC San Diego cancer research mentors during the school year. To date, 131 students have been trained through the CURE program.

The Cancer Center Creating Scientists to Address Cancer Disparities program, which offers 15 to 18 local community college students planning to transfer to UC San Diego with eight weeks of laboratory and classroom training in the biomedical and behavioral sciences in the summer. Following this, they participate in UC San Diego research mentors’ labs during the school year.

The UC San Diego School of Medicine Undergraduate Research Methodology Training Laboratory, a summer and year-long program for community college and undergraduate students. Since 2006, 172 students have acquired their laboratory research skills under the guidance of Dr. Russell. Ninety-eight percent of students in the program graduate with a BA/BS; 58 percent enter graduate or professional school.

The Bridges to the Baccalaureate program, in which 12 to 15 Mesa College students participate in a UC San Diego 8-week summer training program, with most students continuing to work in mentors’ labs during the school year.

Dr. Russell is survived by his son, Keith, and his wife, Kiki Devries; his daughter, Kim Russell, and her husband, Malvin Titus; five grandchildren: Augustus Percival Russell, Brian Nicholson, Brina Griffith, Brandon Russell and Briana Russell; and great-grandson Vailen Russell.

The Office of Diversity and Community Partnership will forever remember Dr. Percy Russell and all of his contributions to diversity. He will be extremely missed by all of his colleagues and especially his students.
Happy Birthday Wishes to our PRIMErs!

May
Inga Wilder 5/3
Diana Garcia 5/7
Christian Lopez 5/15
Richard Kow 5/16

June
TC Robbins 6/23

July
Bryan Davis 7/9
Daniel Woolridge 7/6
Viridiana Tapia 7/8

August
Jacob Bailey 8/15

For more information about UCSD PRIME-HEq:
https://meded.ucsd.edu/index.cfm/asa/dcp/primeheq