Introducing The UCSD Health Sciences Institute (UHSI)

It is my pleasure to introduce to you the new UCSD Health Sciences Institute (UHSI). UHSI is a premiere science enrichment academy which prepares students to excel academically while actively addressing health issues in their communities. UHSI programs assist high school, community college and undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds to become experts in various fields, and advocates for change. The academy will officially launch in the fall of 2008.

UHSI is comprised of three pre-existing pipeline programs - The Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC), the UniversityLink Medical Science Program (ULMSP), and the UCSD Research Methodology Training Lab (RMTL) (these programs were described in our previous issue). UHSI will expand these programs by implementing a peer mentoring element, establishing a middle and high school “Doctor’s Academy” including service learning and college preparatory components, reinforcing the students’ commitment to social justice and interpersonal relationships, and expanding the evaluation to assess such skills, attitudes and behaviors.

UHSI allows the University to remain focused on providing quality opportunities to diverse students; not only for their academic enrichment but also for their social empowerment.

Below are some accomplishments of our pipeline programs before integration into UHSI. Outcomes are expected to improve now that the programs have adopted a new mission and more explicit measurable objectives.

One of the main goals of the UCSD Health Sciences Institute (UHSI) is to ensure students advance to the next step in the pipeline. UHSI serves students at the middle and high school, community college, and UCSD undergraduate levels. UHSI students have advanced exceptionally well compared to their counterparts state and nationwide.

UHSI students also tend to remain and graduate in the biomedical sciences. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of high school students, 95% of community college students in RMTL, and 86% of undergraduates have graduated and/or been retained in these fields after their advancement.

UHSI Advancement Rates

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<tr>
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<th>UHSI</th>
<th>Comparison: All Ethnic Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School: College-Going Rate</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>45%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community College: Transfer Rate</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate: Graduate/Professional School-Going Rate</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>19%</td>
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Note: College-going rates for comparison are statewide, other rates are nationwide.
Your Pipeline

The UCSD School of Medicine Pipeline Pump consists of programs at different levels of the educational pathway to provide you with the tools you need to successfully address disparities affecting at-risk groups. You may transfer from one program to the next as you advance academically, thereby going through your “Pipeline” of academic enrichment programs. Below is an illustration of this pipeline.

In this issue we are highlighting our University Link Medical Science Program (ULMSP). For more information on a particular program, please contact the coordinator for that program.

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**Health Sciences – Graduate and Medical School** *(NCMHD & UCSD-SOM)*

**Cognitive Strategies**
- SOM Support Program
  - Contact: Dr. Rosalind Streichler
  - rstreichler@ucsd.edu
  - (858)534-3958

**Allied Health Programs**
- Research Support Program
  - Contact: Dr. Gregory Talavera
  - gtalaver@mail.sdsu.edu
  - (619) 594-4086

**Post-Baccalaureate** *(TCE & UCOP)*

**Post-Baccalaureate**
- Med School Prep
  - Contact: Saundra Kirk
  - sikirk@ucsd.edu
  - (858)534-4171

**University Undergraduate**

**UCSD Health Sciences Institute**

**ULMSP**
- Health Sciences Transfer Guarantee Program
  - Contact: Milan Dang
  - tvdang@ucsd.edu
  - (619)681-0524

**COPC**
- Science Enrichment Program
  - Locations:
    - National City Middle School
    - Sweetwater High School
  - Contact: Carmela Arstill
  - Carmela@ucsd.edu
  - (760) 815-1432

**Research Methodology Training Lab (RMTL)**
- Training on Basic and Advanced Biology Laboratory Skills
- Test Prep Courses for High School Students
- Placement in other UCSD Labs

**Serves**
- High School Juniors and Seniors
- Community College Students
- UCSD and SDSU Undergraduates

**Contact**
- Anita K. Williams
  - akwilliams@ucsd.edu
  - (858) 534-0127

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* Programs in the pipeline are funded by the following organizations: The California Endowment (TCE), and The National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD), University of California Office of the President (UCOP), and the UCSD School of Medicine (UCSD-SOM).
Throughout my high school career, I strived to be the best of the best. I was president of four clubs, a student body member, and an honor roll student. All my efforts were in hopes of being accepted to either UCSD or UCLA.

Community college was never seen as an option, and in the Imperial Valley, going to the community college when you're considered at the top of your class is seen as a shame. Everything was going according to plan. I was accepted to five University of California schools, including my two dream schools.

My final semester was a drag and I ended up with low scores and a low semester G.P.A. This shot my chances and my acceptance was declined in mid August. Devastated, I enrolled at Imperial Valley College and started my two-year journey.

The first few months were devastating, I thought my dreams of becoming a doctor were over because of the fact I wasn't at the schools all my friends went to. I soon realized that community college was just an alternate option and not negative at all. My classes were filled with students with similar stories.

Luckily, one day in my chemistry class I was listening to a presentation about a program designed just for community college students. I was thrilled to hear about it and quickly applied. The University Link Medical Science Program (ULMSP) proved to be all that I thought it was and more. Not only did I realize I still have a chance, but meeting twelve other fellow participants who are going through the same process made all the difference. The month long journey shaped my views about my academic career and gave me the tools necessary to achieve greatness.

During the course of the program, I learned essential tips on how to handle even the toughest situations on assignments. Even the smallest bit of advice has been useful. Spending time with seventeen individuals (students, counselors and associate directors) who attended community college, and are attending UCSD blew me away. In a way, all my self-doubts flew out the window. My test taking skills improved, and I came back to my community ready to volunteer at the hospital and take charge at school.

Now, I'm not only a member of the student government, but I'm also secretary. I attend other important meetings such as college council and I am working to start a chemistry club. This year I would like to be a part of the volunteering program at the El Centro Regional Hospital. The volunteer coordinator at the hospital is looking for a leader with fresh ideas. I think he has found his girl.

Currently, I'm planning on taking all the great ideas I learned in the ULMSP and implementing them for the volunteer programs at the hospital. Every Tuesday and Thursday during the ULMSP program, we were given the wonderful opportunity to job shadow physicians. I made it a point to ask how they thought volunteers could be used so I could come back home and present the ideas to the coordinator.

I just want to thank everyone in the ULMSP for this life altering opportunity. The ULMSP has strengthened my character and has revitalized my passion to pursue my dreams.
Triumph: Zana Ahmad

Zana Ahmad immigrated to the United States from Kurdistan; where his family remains to this day. Although, he earned a two-year degree in electrical engineering, he decided to enrolled in Grossmont Community College to pursue a career in medicine.

In the United States, Zana has encountered a substantial language barrier as well as struggles with economic difficulties. However, Zana continued to pursue his goals and learned about the ULMSP program “by accident,” from a friend of a friend. Zana notes that he learned “everything” needed to succeed in college during that month-long summer program.

He recalls that the lectures were very informative and inspiring. Most importantly, with the help of ULMSP, Zana was able to shadow three physicians and get connected with the Faculty Mentor Program.

In 2007, Zana graduated from UCSD with a Bachelor’s Degree in Human Biology with 4.0 GPA and provost honors. Also, he worked with Dr. Weg Ongkoko as an assistant on three research projects studying cancer in various forms. With these experiences, Zana has found a passion for academic medicine and patient care. He hopes to unite these passions in his future medical career. After hearing that the ULMSP program might be discontinued, Zana said that he is “very disappointed” and that “I thought of ULMSP as a perfect program. Just maintaining and keeping it alive for at least 5 more years is important.”

Connections: Vu Hong

Vu Hong and his parents came to the United States of America in the spring of 2000. Like many other immigrants, Vu faced the challenges of language and cultural barriers. Understanding his obstacles, Vu took English as a Second Language classes at a local vocational school for over one year before enrolling in Grossmont Community College to pursue a career in medicine.

In 2001, Vu obtained learning skills and approaches for taking standardized tests, which he never heard of in Vietnam. He also established a good relationship with former director Mr. Flynn and the executive director Dr. Daley, who later became his long-term mentor.

However, unlike other participants, the doctor shadowing experience did not reconfirm his interest. Vu’s plan had changed. He applied for other UC schools besides UCSD and was accepted to the University of California, Berkeley. Vu used his ULMSP connections to find new resources at Berkeley. Vu came back to San Diego in the fall of 2006 to obtain his PhD from the Scripps Institute.

For other disadvantaged students who want to pursue a career in health sciences, Vu suggests, “follow your heart and go for it, and you must ask what you want before figuring out whether the answer is ‘yes’ or ‘no’.”

MENTORING TIPS:

1. Think about your needs and what you’d like your mentor to do for you
2. Think about and list possible mentors
3. Decide how you will approach the prospective mentors
4. Ask the person to be your mentor
5. Be patient
6. Obtain at least 3 mentors: An academic, a career, and a personal-life mentor.

Source: http://www.imdiversity.com/Villages/Careers/articles/whitehead_find_a_mentor.asp

Take a Tip

We all look to those who have come before us to serve as good examples. As young professionals, we seek out mentors. But, as with everything in life, we need to make good decisions and choices in selecting the people we want to emulate.

Words of Inspiration

“The future depends on what we do in the present.”

~Mahatma Gandhi
The University Link Medical Science Program was instrumental in preparing me for life as an undergraduate at University of California, San Diego and towards my goal of entering a combined MD/PhD program. Having struggled in high school because of the lack of education in my own home (my father never went to school, my mother only completed high school) and having moved to the United States from my birthplace, Mexico City, during high school, I began at the community college without a real sense of direction past that of wanting to improve my lot in life. Trying many subjects, I finally hit biology and psychology; beginning my interest in neuroscience and a growing desire to help serve my community.

I was torn between either setting a course towards research or towards medicine at the time of my graduation from San Diego Miramar College. My counselor at the community college, Jodi Corliss, suggested I try an exciting new program offered by the School of Medicine at UCSD for community college students, the University Link Medical Science Program to help gain experiences that might help me on my way.

This would be a perfect transition for me, Jodi said, in the summer between graduating from community college and beginning at UCSD. Just the fact that such a program existed and that we were invited to stay on campus really made me feel for the first time that my pursuits of academia were possible. With the amazing support and reassurance from Dr. Daley and Michael Flynn I felt comfortable to speak up of my interests in pursuing such a rigorous program as the MD/PhD program I am currently enrolled in. It was a home away from home where I could receive the guidance necessary to navigate my time at UCSD, the MCAT and applying to medical school.

The lectures from Michael Flynn were pivotal in appreciating metacognition over study habits and test-taking skills I learned have been very helpful in dealing with the daily challenges I face. The experience of having debated an ethical issue helps me understand and deal with the complex issues that physicians encounter daily. Having researched a topic and presented a poster aided me in practicing the skills that a researcher requires to collect and synthesize information and present it to others in a coherent way.

I would not be where I am today, both in terms of my position as an MD/PhD student and as a person, were it not for ULMSP.

Now in the second year of medical school, I have been reminded in many ways, both large and small, of my time with the ULSMP. Foremost is the feeling that I am at a world class institution were I deserve to be and am received warmly. Any medical student in my class would tell you that, rigorous as the curriculum might be, we are an important part of the system; this is a feeling that can sometimes be lost in the informalities encountered at a large institution such as UCSD, especially where transfer students do not tend to reap the same benefits from the college system as do students who matriculate directly from high school and have the benefit of living on campus. The study habits and test-talking skills I learned have been very helpful in dealing with the daily challenges I face. The experience of having debated an ethical issue helps me understand and deal with the complex issues that physicians encounter daily. Having researched a topic and presented a poster aided me in practicing the skills that a researcher requires to collect and synthesize information and present it to others in a coherent way.

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