

May 02, 2011

Q&A with Jacob Bailey



After growing up in a predominantly Latino community in Los Angeles, Jacob Bailey had an eye-opening experience when he transferred from a Southern California community college to the University of Utah as an undergraduate. He realized he was one of only seven Latinos in his class at the College of Science, so he set out on a personal mission to recruit and encourage underrepresented students to attend college. Now a second-year medical student at UC San Diego, he continues his outreach efforts through the School of Medicine. He is determined to give back to his community through his research and career in medicine. .

What drew you into medicine? Why did you choose UC San Diego School of Medicine?

Bailey: Going to school at the University of Utah as an undergraduate was a turning point in my life that steered me towards medicine. It was drastically different than where I grew up in Los Angeles. My high school was predominately Latino, my mother's family is from Mexico and I lived in Mexico City for a few years after high school. At Utah, there were only seven Latinos who graduated in the entire College of Science the year that I did. While an undergraduate, two of my friends and I started an organization to promote higher education and the sciences to minority and underserved kids in local high schools and community colleges. The impact it had on me was huge because it reinforced my commitment to serve others. Up until that point, my goals were to go into research. I was working in an immunology laboratory and was enjoying myself. Fortunately, I had wonderful mentors during that time who showed me how to combine my passions and interests. As time went on, I started to feel more and more that medicine was my calling. My choice to attend UC San Diego's School of Medicine stemmed from my commitment to my Latino community and the desire to become better at serving others. Our School of Medicine has a dual-degree program called Program in Medical Education, or PRIME, that is designed to train physician leaders to meet the needs of underserved communities. Over the course of five years, I will not only get my medical degree, but also a master's related to this mission.

Why is it important to you to reach out to underrepresented students?

Bailey: It's important to me because California has 294 physicians per 100,000 people, but there are only 30 Latino physicians per 100,000 Latinos. Put another way, almost 40 percent of Californians are Latino, but only 5 percent of our doctors are Latino. Adults always tell children they can grow up to be

anything they want but, without an example, the road is much harder. I was fortunate to have wonderful mentors so now it's my responsibility, and a privilege, to reach out to others.

What are some of the outreach activities that you've participated in through UC San Diego's School of Medicine?

Bailey: I'm heavily involved in the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) and PRIME, but two activities that I've enjoyed most have been our "Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies" and "Doc-4-a-Day" programs. The first one is a partnership with Lincoln High School where I was able to teach health to a 10th-grade class for a semester. Doc-4-a-Day is a really big event that happens twice a year at the School of Medicine where we invite high school students from underserved areas to the campus to learn how to be doctors. The students come from all over the county for workshops on things like human physiology and taking vital signs. We also give them a tour, let them do dissections, and explain how to apply to college and medical school.

What advice do you have for young students who want to attain a higher education or go to medical school, but worry about financial aid and other obstacles?

Bailey: Don't let anything stop you. By overcoming challenges, you grow and develop the skills that you will later use to help others. Find a mentor who will show you how to turn your obstacles into opportunities. Surround yourself with friends who will help you on your journey, and help them in turn. Learning is its own reward, and there are grants, scholarships, loans and jobs that will help you pay for it. Is it expensive? Yes. Is it worth it? Most definitely.

Which field interests you the most and where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Bailey: At this point, there are several specialties that interest me but the aspect of medicine that interests me the most is how it interacts with diverse cultures. In 10 years, I would love to be at an institution that will allow me to work in neighborhoods like the one I grew up in and work with kids who aspire to become doctors.

Fun Faves

Favorite place at UC San Diego: The Grove Gallery area

Favorite place on Earth: With my family **Favorite accomplishment:** Whichever one I last achieve

Favorite hobby: Music or riding my bike — it's a toss-up **Favorite way to spend \$10:** Tacos El Gordo followed by ice cream

Favorite words to live by: "Enjoy the now for what it is. Looking towards the future gives direction, looking to the past provides context. But, between the two is where we find happiness."

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