

Sandra Daley Receives Grant to Increase Diversity in Health Professions



Daley

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently awarded \$742,222 to UC San Diego's Dr. Sandra Daley, professor of pediatrics and director of the Comprehensive Research Center in Health Disparities, to fund the Health Careers Opportunity Program/San Diego Regional Consortium (HCOP/SDRC). The program is designed to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds develop the skills needed to successfully compete, enter and graduate from health professions schools. HCOP/SDRC was one of just fourteen programs in the nation to receive funding.

"UC San Diego is committed to providing students of all backgrounds with the tools and resources they need to be successful in their educational endeavors," said Daley. "This grant supports our mission by funding programs that will help disadvantaged students in San Diego pursue their dreams of becoming doctors, nurses and other health professionals, and thereby ensure a strong and diverse healthcare workforce for our nation's future."

HCOP/SDRC works to build an educational pipeline of students on track to enter the health sciences field by offering a variety of academic enrichment programs, beginning in middle school and continuing through professional school, for students who otherwise might not have access. UC San Diego partners with schools in the San Diego Unified and Sweetwater School Districts, and community colleges throughout San Diego and Imperial counties to provide students with mentoring programs, lab activities, workshops, hands-on research training and other support services that enhance student education. To date, more than 1,500 students have gone through these programs.

“A lot of underserved students have a tremendous amount of potential, but lack role models,” said Aldo Rodriguez, a third year student at the UC San Diego School of Medicine and counselor for HCOP’s UniversityLink Medical Science Program (ULMSP). A summer program for community college students from disadvantaged backgrounds, ULMSP provides four weeks of rigorous academic training, including writing and science classes, combined with mentoring and networking opportunities.



“These programs bring together mentors, resources and networking—tools for success that more affluent students typically already have access to. It helps to level the playing field,” Rodriguez continued.

Originally from Fresno, Calif., Rodriguez recalls experiencing many of the same educational challenges as the students he mentors today. In high school, Rodriguez participated in college prep programs that connected him with mentors, networking, academic resources and other opportunities that helped him get accepted—and succeed—at UC Berkeley.

“When you have mentors with a similar background as you, it helps you to really see what’s possible,” he said. “I’ve seen definite improvements in all of the students I work with in ULMSP. Many who initially just wanted a four-year degree leave the program with a goal to pursue medical school or another type of professional school. As they go through the program, they discover what they’re really capable of.”

The Health Careers Opportunity Program, San Diego Regional Consortium (HCOP/SDRC) is a partnership between the UC San Diego School of Medicine, the San Diego State University Pre-College Institute, the Scripps San Diego Border Area Health Education Center, nine community colleges participating in the UC San Diego “UniversityLink” Transfer Student Guarantee Program and 12 of their “feeder” middle and high schools in inner city, border, east suburban and rural communities. HCOP was established in 2004 and is one of two Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) academic enrichment programs conducted at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. The other is the Hispanic Center of Excellence, established in 1993.

For more information about initiatives that enhance the UC San Diego campus and support a diverse community, visit <http://giving.ucsd.edu/diversity>.

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