About Our Program

The UC Irvine School of Medicine Postbaccalaureate Program is designed to assist applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds in gaining acceptance to medical school, with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of physicians in underserved areas. The program, which has been in existence since 1986, has successfully placed 90 percent of its participants who applied to U.S. medical or other health professional schools. Students in the program are provided with a supportive environment and resources as they strengthen their learning skills, demonstrate proficiency in the sciences, and prepare for the MCAT exam and application to medical school.

Over the course of the one-year program, students will complete a total of 40 quarter units in mostly upper-division biological science courses. An intensive MCAT exam preparation phase is conducted during the spring quarter. Students receive one-on-one academic counseling on a regular basis to formulate the classes that will best meet their academic needs and discuss the areas they can further develop in their application to medical school.

Welcome Our Newest Cohort!

We are excited to announce our 11 incoming students in the 2019-2020 UC Irvine Postbaccalaureate Program cohort. The students began the program on June 20, 2019.

Jennifer Diaz, UC Berkeley
Javier Guerrero, UC Santa Barbara
Jesus Lopez, San Jose State University
Donna Marapao, UC Berkeley
Akira McDaniels, UC Santa Barbara
Liliana Perez, UCLA
Alejandra Rivas, UC Berkeley
Ana Sevilla, UC Riverside
Hilary Tang, UC Berkeley
Melissa Venegas, UCLA
Suhail Zeb, UC Davis

Congratulations to the students of the 2018-2019 UC Irvine Postbaccalaureate Cohort

We wish them all the best in their future endeavors!
Recent Graduate: Graciela Maldonado, M.D., MS (2011-2012 Postbaccalaureate Cohort)

I was born in Michoacán, Mexico, and raised in Santa Ana, California. I have an older brother and a younger sister. As a high school student determined to be a graphic designer, I had a school assignment to explore other careers and was surprised how fast I fell in love with medicine. The combination of science, technology, and helping people was perfect for me. I attended UC Irvine for my undergraduate education, but in the end, I did not have a very competitive GPA that would be competitive enough to apply to medical school. I also struggled with the verbal section of the MCAT exam. I needed guidance and support to improve in these areas before applying to medical school, and I received exactly that from the Postbaccalaureate Program.

I was accepted into the Postbaccalaureate Program at UC Irvine School of Medicine in 2011. The structure of the program and academic advising received were very beneficial in helping me in taking upper-division science classes (i.e., immunology, cell biology, advanced biochemistry) that would not only help me be competitive to apply to medical school but also prepare me for the MCAT exam and medical school. As a student who took the MCAT exam twice on their own without success, the program’s MCAT preparation and resources helped me immensely that I actually doubled my verbal score. In addition, the program provided invaluable guidance on my application and assisted me in the writing and editing of my activities and personal statement to make my application more impactful overall.

After completing the Postbaccalaureate program in 2012, I spent the following year as a UCI School of Medicine conditional student where I took select courses with the first-year medical students. Upon successful completion of the program, I was granted admission to UC Irvine School of Medicine in 2013 and joined the Program in Medical Education for the Latino Community (PRIME-LC). Looking back, having completed rigorous upper-division science courses in the Postbaccalaureate Program truly prepared me and gave me a strong foundation for the courses I took while in medical school. As a medical student, I also stayed in close touch with my Postbaccalaureate classmates, in fact, they are now some of my best friends. Though the years I did my best to attend many of the mentor events in order to give back and help the next generation of pre-medical students.

Recently I moved away to Rochester, Minnesota to begin residency in emergency medicine at the Mayo Clinic. My hope is not to just survive my three year residency program, but to excel in all that I do. In the future I plan to do a fellowship in education. Ultimately, I would love to return to UCI and work in the Emergency Department at the UCI Medical Center. While a little more difficult being out of state, I do plan to stay active as a program alumna by keeping the “door open” to any Postbaccalaureate student who is seeking guidance and mentorship.

Medical Student: Marlene Torres, MS3, PRIME-LC, UC Irvine (2015-2016 Postbaccalaureate Cohort)

As a first-generation American, growing up in a predominantly low-income Latino and immigrant community, I took it upon myself to pave the path for my four younger siblings and to help them balance our Mexican heritage while navigating life in the US. Throughout my childhood I witnessed illness and premature deaths related to preventable diseases, environmental pollutants, addiction, homelessness, and healthcare barriers. I became driven to pursue a career in medicine after witnessing the unfortunate consequences of a broken healthcare system within my family and community. I started my undergraduate education at UCI with a goal to be a doctor. However, I quickly became plagued with unfamiliar uncertainty and insecurities. I struggled to find my home away from home and struggled in my biology and science courses. All of this on top of a poor foundation of the sciences led to my academic struggles. Despite being encouraged by counselors and others to strongly consider a career outside of medicine, I continued to find myself driven to pursue medicine.

When I graduated college, I felt lost. I did not know what steps I needed to take next and my dream of being a doctor felt impossible. Fortunately, I was accepted into the UC Irvine School of Medicine Postbaccalaureate Program in the spring of 2015. There are many reasons as to why the program contributed to my success in gaining admission to medical school. Most importantly, the structure of the program and individual counseling were unparalleled. I gained insight into what admissions committees considered a strong applicant. With the help of my counselor, I worked on identifying my weaknesses and actively worked on them. I learned to ask for help and became proactive in my learning by asking questions during class, attending office hours, forming study groups, and trying new study methods. One of the things I am most grateful for is the amazing group of people that I met in the program—my cohort peers, program alumni, and program supporters. I gained a close network of individuals who were driven to pursue medicine from similar upbringings and for similar reasons.

In the fall of 2016, I was thrilled to matriculate at UC Irvine School of Medicine and join the Program in Medical Education for the Latino Community (PRIME-LC). With the skill set I gained in the Postbaccalaureate Program, I was able to start medical school with a strong foundation in the sciences, flexibility and awareness of different study strategies I needed for different courses, and increased confidence in my abilities to succeed. As a medical student at UCI, I have stayed connected with the Postbaccalaureate Program by attending mentorship events and guiding students regarding study skills, MCAT prep, and wellness. I remain passionate about mentorship, outreach, and serving vulnerable communities. I have been active in projects to increase the representation of underrepresented groups such as serving as the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) co-chair and organizing a pre-health conference for over 200 students, predominantly from minority groups. I recently completed my third year of medical school at UCI and as a PRIME-LC student, I am privileged to participate in the summer infectious disease rotation in Lima, Peru. Beginning this fall, I am excited to pursue a Master’s in Public Health at Harvard University in order to further my training and experience in serving the health needs of marginalized and vulnerable communities. My interests include primary care, mental health, and community health. I am interested in pursuing a residency in Internal Medicine, Psychiatry, Family Medicine or a combined residency program.
ALUMNI UPDATES

Congratulations and good luck to our Postbaccalaureate Program and Conditional Program alumni who matriculate into medical school this August! We wish you all the best!

We are proud to announce our program alumni who graduated with their medical degree in 2019:

- **Jemma Alarcon, M.D.**
  Family Medicine, Ventura County Medical Center
- **Anthony Bui, M.D.**
  Urology, Mt. Sinai, Miami FL
- **Marisela Cardenas, M.D., MPH**
  Pediatrics, UC San Diego Rady Children’s Hospital
- **Nika Carillo, M.D.**
  Internal Medicine, Kaiser Oakland CA
- **Graciela Maldonado, M.D., MS**
  Emergency Medicine, Mayo Clinic, Rochester MN
- **Rogelio Sanchez, M.D.**
  Family Medicine, White Memorial Hospital
- **Jonathan Schilling, M.D., MBA**
  Internal Medicine, UCI Medical Center
- **Tara Zand, M.D.**
  Emergency Medicine, UCI Medical Center

Keep in Touch!

School of Medicine Postbaccalaureate Alumni:
We always enjoy hearing from you and want to know about your latest professional and personal activities.

Please feel free to send updates to **pbsom@uci.edu**

Join our **UCI SOM Postbacc Alumni Facebook group** and stay connected!