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 and admissions counseling on a regular basis to best meet their academic needs and discuss the areas they can further develop in their preparation and application for medical school.

Welcome Our Newest Cohort!

We are excited to announce our 12 incoming students in the 2020-2021 UC Irvine Postbaccalaureate Program cohort. The students began the program on June 18, 2020.

Natalie Aceves, UC Berkeley
Diana Aguilar, UC Riverside
Trinidad Alcala-Arcos, UC Davis
Brandon Doan, UC Santa Cruz
Nyjeeiah Ganan, University of La Verne
Jeneane Hamideh, UC Riverside
Alejandra Hurtado, UC Irvine
Anthony Jones, CSU East Bay
Nooneh Khachatourian, UCLA
Sigry Ortiz Flores, UC Merced
Melanie Venegas, UCLA
Julian Zana, UC Irvine

Congratulations to the students of the 2019-2020 UC Irvine Postbaccalaureate Cohort
We wish them all the best in their future endeavors.
Recent Graduate: Oscar Hernandez, M.D., MBA (2014-2015 Postbaccalaureate Cohort)

It was uncertainty, poverty, and violence that caused my teenage parents to pack a few belongings and all of their courage and leave Mexico for a new life in the U.S. We settled in a trailer park in San Diego, CA, where I first learned the meaning of community. My community always supported me when my family’s resources fell short. Experiencing firsthand the lack of resources, opportunity, and healthcare that affect at-risk communities focused my efforts towards helping the underserved, so I invested in my education. When I was the first in my family to graduate high school and attend a 4-year university, it was their accomplishment as much as it was mine.

Pursuing a higher education at UC San Diego introduced me to the many barriers I would face as an undocumented student. My immigration status excluded me from financial aid and caused many interruptions in my studies. The unfortunate circumstances hindered my path to success. From juggling three jobs and dealing with issues at home, I eventually graduated from UCSD, but not without incredible lack of direction and support. Just like I had turned to my community for resources before, this time I sought help from UC Irvine’s Postbaccalaureate Program looking for a fostering environment that would allow me to prove I was ready for medical school.

UCI’s Postbacc Program offered the opportunities I would have not otherwise been able to obtain as a postgraduate. The rigorous upper division coursework, MCAT study sessions, and the strong network of educated individuals with similar goals and interests, became the gateway to revitalizing my dream of becoming a doctor. Despite the disadvantages that I carried as an undocumented immigrant and the uncharted paths I have taken throughout my lifetime, the program believed in me. This belief took me farther than I could have gone alone. Shortly after the Postbacc Program, I gained acceptance at UCI School of Medicine.

In medical school, I developed the skills to best serve my future patients and mentor the next generation of students finding their way down uncertain paths. I was accepted into UCI’s Program in Medical Education for the Latino Community (PRIME-LC), which focuses on training culturally sensitive and linguistically competent physicians-leaders. I gained valuable leadership experience building pipeline programs and advocating for underrepresented students through my work as president of UCI SOM’s Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) and co-founder of the UndocuMed student organization. I pursued an MBA to enable me to strengthen, expand, and create further projects that improve access to higher education and improve health outcomes for communities like mine. Medical school showed me how the transformative impact of high-quality surgical care ripples beyond the operating room. I look forward to becoming a general surgeon at the Cleveland Clinic, an institution that values the power of community. My community taught me not to define myself by the obstacles I face, but by how I have overcome them, and each step on my journey has strengthened my resolve to expand access to surgical care to underserved communities like my own.

Medical Student: Jessica Colin Escobar, MS4, PRIME-LC, UC Irvine (2016-2017 Postbaccalaureate Cohort)

My name is Jessica Colin Escobar and I was raised in Modesto, California by immigrant parents. Their strong work ethic, perseverance and ability to overcome so much adversity shaped me into the individual I am today. My first encounters with medicine were translating for my parents at medical visits and feeling uncomfortable during those interactions. It was not until I went to college that I realized that my experience was not the norm and that it was downright illegal.

As an undergraduate student I struggled with feelings of inadequacy and failure. During this time, I was balancing being a full-time student, part-time worker, along with research and volunteering activities. My last two years of college, my grades began to improve, but I was not a competitive medical school applicant. A mentor suggested I apply to a Postbaccalaureate Program, and on my second try, I was accepted into this wonderful program. For me the most important aspect of the Postbacc Program was the individualized counseling support. I had a lot of self-doubt in my ability to be academically successful at UCI. With the guidance provided by my counselor, I was able to see my potential and my success when I was only focused on academics. Additionally, the mentorship provided by program alumni was very valuable. I was able to ask questions and speak openly about my struggles during the program, and with their guidance I gained insight into new ways of studying in challenging courses. The MCAT preparation courses and resources were also very helpful with my success in gaining admission into UCI SOM.

After successfully completing upper-division biology courses and conquering the MCAT exam, in 2017, was offered admission to UCI School of Medicine and joined the Program in Medical Education for the Latino Community (PRIME-LC). After completing the UCI Postbacc Program, I had a strong foundation in basic sciences and a newly gained confidence in my abilities to be successful in academics. I was able to apply my new study strategies and reached out to the mentors gained during the program for continued support as a medical student at UCI.

As a current medical student, I have stayed connected to the Postbacc Program through the years and attend various mentorship events. I remember how valuable my interactions were with alumni and my hope is for current and future Postbacc students to benefit from the same support and guidance from me and other alumni. It has been exciting to see some of my mentees eventually become a part of the PRIME-LC family at UCI SOM. The UCI Postbacc Program not only helped me achieve my goals and dreams of becoming a physician, but created a community where I felt accepted and included.

"The UCI Postbacc Program not only helped me achieve my goals and dreams of becoming a physician, but created a community where I felt accepted and included."

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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!

Ezequiel Andrade M.D., MPH
Family Medicine, Harbor UCLA

Cynthia Enriquez, M.D., MBA
Pediatrics, Children’s Hospital Los Angeles

Daniel Escamilla, M.D.
Family Medicine, Contra Costa Family Residency Program

Evelyn Escobedo, M.D., MPP
Family Medicine, White Memorial Medical Center

Oscar Hernandez, M.D., MBA
General Surgery, Cleveland Clinic, OH

Marissa Lovio, M.D.
OB/GYN, Kaiser Santa Clara

Evangelina Molina M.D., MBA
Pediatrics, Stanford

Amin Tavakoli, M.D.
OB/GYN, LAC+USC Medical Center

Luke Yu, M.D., MPH
Pediatrics, Children’s Hospital of Orange County

Chau Nguyen
PB 2017-2018
MS1, UC Irvine

Alexis Pellecer
PB 2018-2019
MS1, UC Irvine, PRIME-LC

Dailyn Rodriguez
PB 2016-2017
MS1, UCLA, PRIME-LA

Michelle Sendjeas
PB 2014-2015
OMS1, Western University

Olive Anagu
2019 Conditional Program
MS1, UC Irvine, LEAD-ABC

Jessica Arizmendi De La Torre
PB 2018-2019
MS1, UC Irvine, PRIME-LC

Tiffany Calero
PB 2017-2018
MS1, USC Keck

Kelly Hernandez
2019 Conditional Program
MS1, UC Irvine, PRIME-LC

Aeryus Holloway
PB 2018-2019, 2019 Conditional Program
MS1, UC Irvine, LEAD-ABC

We are proud to announce our program alumni who graduated with their medical degree in 2020:

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!

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