I was beyond surprised when asked to write something for the “Momento de Reflexión.” I could not help thinking that someone must have needed to fill some blank space and I was the last resource. Regardless, I am honored for the opportunity. I started with PRIME-LC right after the 2nd cohort had been selected waaaaaaaay back in 2005. I have had the privilege of meeting every student that has been a part of PRIME-LC at one time or another. Many things have happened in my 13 plus years; faculty, students and staff have come and gone, adjustments made; many students arrived single and left married, or came childless and left with a family; or both!

And yet, the core and mission of PRIME-LC remains and continues to grow stronger. The students’ sense of social responsibility, and faculty like Dr. Charles Vega, have transformed this program from what one day, Dr. Alberto Manetta, started as a good idea that made sense, to a signature program that has become a model for others to emulate. Being a part of PRIME-LC has been a privilege. The students and people I have met at UCI are my other family, and the memories of those that came and left are now imprinted in my heart. I have been blessed beyond expectation. Thank you all, it has been a privilege to count you all among my friends.

Lucero Zamudio Fernandez
Program-Coordinator PRIME-LC
The PRIME-LC class of 2022 is our biggest ever – 16 students – and recruitment for the class of 2023 is off to a roaring start. And we need these passionate physician-to-be more than ever. PRIME-LC is active in the community and in advocacy in protecting our friends, neighbors, and loved ones from discrimination and injustice. Health is a great platform from which to further the larger cause of social justice, and our focus on leadership is stronger than ever. Together with our patients and our community, we can accomplish great things.

Investing in others is a foundational skill that allows leaders to achieve big things by inspiring collaboration. PRIME-LC students are making positive changes in the world by developing projects that achieve their aims by supporting the priorities of the people we partner with.

They’ve spent time with students in a local diversity pipeline program for future health professionals, leading an activity to plant the seeds for delivering care with humility and empathy in the future while sharing practical insights on steps they can take towards their career goals today. They’ve volunteered their time with community partners with missions ranging from cultural preservation, to hunger relief, to educational mentorship, to neighborhood wellness to inspire a new set of projects addressing barriers to health equity. They’ve hosted and attended outreach events at pre-health conferences across the county and state to offer guidance and inspiration to the next generation of physician leaders. This investment in others cultivates energy, creativity and commitment in partnerships, which produces results that greatly exceed what we could achieve on our own.

These efforts all began by listening to the goals and needs of others, investing in those goals, and offering guidance and shared recognition in the results that are achieved. In this way, PRIME-LC students develop approaches that they can carry into their careers to multiply their effort beyond what they could do alone.
Dr. Autumn Ivy was recruited as PRIME-LC faculty on July 1, 2017 from Stanford School of Medicine where she completed her residency and fellowship training in Pediatrics and Child Neurology. Prior to that, she graduated from UCI School of Medicine’s MSTP program. (GO Anteaters!) She was inspired to become a physician-scientist during her undergraduate years, studying brain neurotrophic factor expression with exercise and antidepressant treatment. Given this work’s application to human aging, learning and memory, she was motivated to blend clinical care with discoveries made in the lab. Currently the Ivy Lab uses a mouse model of early-life exercise to study its effects on brain development, specifically focusing on how epigenetics can influence how neurons function in a lasting manner.

She describes the clinical relevance of her laboratory research: “It is general knowledge that physical activity is good for us, but exactly how much is needed to optimize our learning and memory? And, how does exercise during childhood (or lack thereof) affect the developing brain long-term? These questions are extremely relevant to children, particularly in the communities PRIME-LC aims to serve. These kids generally have more sedentary lifestyles, limited access to safe spaces for physical activity, and are at greater risk for acquired metabolic syndromes. How early-life physical activity affects children’s brain function is a big unknown.”

As a child neurologist at UCI and CHOC, Dr. Ivy sees children with physical limitations that prevent exercise. How this clinically impacts their brain health and development is also not well studied, and she is hoping to address some of these questions with her research. Dr. Ivy is inspired by PRIME-LC’s mission of targeting health disparities in the Latino community to level the playing field of health care access. She is motivated to mentor students in the program who are interested in designing projects surrounding PRIME-LC’s mission, or exploring the career path of becoming a physician-scientist. Dr. Ivy also emphasizes the importance of the ever-evolving “work-life balance,” particularly juggling career goals and family, and says her door is always open if PRIME students are looking for mentorship in this area!
Outreach and Recruitment Updates
Pedro Alvarez, MS4, MPH and Laura Cuevas, MS1

UCI LMSA/SNMA 16th Annual Pre-Health Conference
The theme of this year's conference was "Embracing Diversity: Strength Through Unity." It was a very powerful conference not only for people in attendance, but for all of the conference organizers as well! Over 200 pre-medical students attended the conference and left empowered to face their struggles in order to achieve success. Attendees participated in motivational workshops, mini-classes on IV/intubation, ultrasound, mock interviews, and recruitment. PRIME-LC and LMSA made connections with community colleges, including Cerritos College and look forward to future outreach events at their campuses!

UCLA MEDPEP Annual Pre-Health Conference
Another dedicated group of PRIME-LC students attended UCLA’s Médicos, Enfermeros, y Dentistas Para el Pueblo (MEDPEP) 7th Annual Pre-Health Conference. There were about 400 attendees, primarily students of color and their parents. Many students had not heard of PRIME-LC and were enthusiastic about our program, and we were happy to reconnect with many other students that had previously attended our own LMSA/SNMA conference.

Alfonso Ortiz-Cruz, MS2 and Laura Cuevas, MS1 (at right) spoke to conference attendees, many from community colleges, about PRIME-LC, paths to medical school, and insight into admissions.

PRIME Statewide Conference
A group of 18 PRIME-LC students, including members of each class, attended this year's PRIME Statewide Conference, hosted by UC Davis and themed "Celebrating Diversity Through Community Engagement." The group attended many inspiring talks and discussions, led workshops on topics including cultural humility and structural competency, and got to know PRIMErs from other schools!

Sports Education & Mentorship at Madison Elementary School
Alfonso Ortiz Cruz, Brenda Gutierrez, Briga Mullin, David Bustillo, Nathan Morales (MS2's)

MS-2 students have gone to Madison Elementary School to conduct a physical education lesson for 4th grade classes. Madison lacks a physical education teacher so they took this opportunity to expose kids to new sports while simultaneously teaching them about the value of exercise for their health. Though the main goal was to allow the kids to play sports and have fun, the PRIME-LC students incorporated some physiology lessons using stethoscopes to listen to heart beats before and after exercise. We also discussed careers and education through high school, college and beyond.

UndocuMed at UCI
Jordan Cahn, MS2, Kelton Mock, MS1, Mackenzie Cater, MS3, Marlene Torres, MS2, Oscar Hernandez, MS3

In the wake of the decision to end DACA and ongoing efforts to criminalize those who are undocumented, we collaborated with the other UC med schools to plan a Week of Action to raise awareness and generate discussion - we counted over 50 attendees at UCI!

Through a crowdfunding campaign, we also raised $2,893 for UCI students eligible to renew their DACA and in need of financial assistance, and were able to benefit six individuals.
Congratulations to our PRIME-LC students on their scholarship awards, achievements, and recognitions!

California Community Service-Learning Scholarship
Lesley Lara, MS4, MPH

Sponsored by the National Medical Fellowships and the California Wellness Foundation, Lesley has been awarded a prestigious $5,000 scholarship to complete a self-directed community service experience to further work she began in her MPH year with Health Navigators at the Serve the People Community Health Center in Santa Ana, CA. Her thesis is entitled, "The Role of Patient Navigators in Eliminating Ethnic and Racial Disparities in Preventive Care Screenings."

Johns Hopkins Minority Scholarship Award, Janice Eddy Mickey Endowment Award, and MPH Scholarship Award
Jemma Alarcón, MPH Candidate

Jemma is currently completing her Masters in Public Health at John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. She has received several scholarships to complement her Master's education including: $9,800 Minority Scholarship Award, $500 Janice Eddy Mickey Endowment Award, and $24,700 MPH Scholarship Award!

Jose Ygnacio Anguiano Sandoval, MD, Memorial Scholarship
Paula Mendoza, MS1

Offered in honor of Dr. Sandoval, proud son of a migrant family in Brawley, CA, Professor of Family Medicine at UC Irvine, and long-time advocate for Latino communities, the scholarship is awarded to a first-year medical student at UC Irvine who is the first in her/his family to graduate from college, has demonstrated work & experiences in the Latino under-served community, and is a fluent Spanish speaker.

American Academy of Family Physicians
Pedro Alvarez, MS4, MPH

Pedro Alvarez was interviewed for a Q&A session with the AAFP News this October. This piece, featured on the AAFP website, highlights what motivated Pedro to pursue a career in medicine, particularly one in Family Medicine, through which he can emphasize the importance of preventative care. His goals stem from personal experiences he faced in the community he grew up in and within his family.

To read more: http://www.aafp.org/news/student-spotlight/20171002qa-alvarez.html

UC Prime-Statewide Conference and California Medical Association/Network of Ethnic Physician Organizations Conference
Briga Mullin, MS2

Congratulations to Briga Mullin, who presented her research at two conferences this year! Her research focused on developing an improved model for patient provider communication by utilizing a community health worker to help patients develop a list of questions about their health concerns and bring them to their primary care diabetes follow-up visits. In the majority of visits, patients asked questions on their list and the patients felt this method facilitated better communication of what was important to them.

Kala Ghooray, a PRIME-LC student currently working on her MPH at UC Berkeley, published a powerful op-ed in the Voice of OC advocating for the humane treatment of homeless people in Santa Ana: "On Tuesday, October 17, the Santa Ana City Council will vote on an ordinance that would make homelessness functionally illegal in the Civic Center."

To read more: https://voiceofoc.org/2017/10/ghooray-homelessness-is-not-a-crime/

¡Felicidades!