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Health conference April 13 features homegrown success stories

Dr. Rene Ramirez and Dr. Veronica Ramirez, both Fresno State alumni and physicians at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine Fresno campus, will keynote the Aspiring Health Leaders Conference 8:30-11:30 a.m. Saturday, April 13.

The event, intended to help motivate students in the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP), will be held in the Alice Peters Auditorium in the Peters Business Building on the Fresno State campus.

The conference is in an effort to help close the gap in the Valley's doctor to patient ratio. About 140 health professionals, resident physicians and students will come together to participate in workshops that prepare students for medical school.

The workshops will include discussions on topics like "The Biochemistry of Nutrition and Healthy Eating," and the "U.S. Healthcare system and current policy reforms."

HCOP helps undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds prepare for careers in medicine through advising, internship opportunities, tutorials, summer programs and professional development seminars.

The program helped the Ramirez husband and wife team achieve their dreams of becoming doctors. At the UCSF Fresno campus, Rene is co-chief resident in emergency medicine and Veronica graduated as a resident and continues to work with UCSF Fresno pediatrics as faculty. She also is a practicing pediatrician in Fresno.

"Both of us came from families where we didn't have anyone to look to for guidance in pursuing medicine and so HCOP really became that for us," says Veronica. She is originally from Kerman, Rene is from Dinuba.

"We literally were in that office day in and day out. It was through the program we learned what it takes to be a good student, a good science student, because that was something very new to us," Veronica said.

The conference Saturday is hosted by Fresno State's College of Science and Mathematics in conjunction with UCSF Fresno's Latino Center for Medical Education and Research (LaCMER), a unit of the UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program.

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Introductions will be given by Dr. Katherine Flores, a Fresno physician who is director of LaCMER, and Dr. Susan Elrod dean of the College of Science and Mathematics at Fresno State.

LaCMER partners with the College of Science and Mathematics in operating the HCOP to help address the serious shortage of physicians and health care professionals in the area. Its mission is to develop individuals to become health care professionals who will ultimately return to the San Joaquin Valley and to provide culturally-competent health care services to the medically underserved.

For more information, contact Juan Carlos Gutierrez at HCOP at 559.278.4150 or jgutierrez@fresno.ucsf.edu.

(University Communications news student assistant Alejandra Garcia contributed to this copy.)

Related links:

- [HCOP](#)
- [Valley Public Radio Story on Rene and Veronica Ramirez](#)

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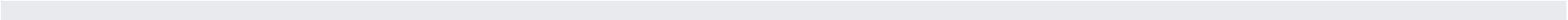
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CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY,
FRESNO
5241 N. Maple Ave.
Fresno, CA 93740
P: 559.278.4240

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