

Miller School's Summer Programs Promote Diversity in Medical Education



Luis Gutierrez says the program helped him regain his focus on a medical career.

Three years ago, Luis Gutierrez was losing his focus on a medical career. But after earning his bachelor's degree at the University of California, Berkeley, he attended a summer program for minority students offered by the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. Now, Gutierrez is a first-year student in the Miller School's M.D./MPH program focusing on emergency medicine.

"The Miami Model for Health Professions Motivation Program was

pivotal in my pursuit of medicine,” said Gutierrez. “I was inspired by being able to talk to physicians and health care providers who come from similar backgrounds, and I could see myself in their shoes.”

Designed to be a mini first-semester medical school experience, the Miami Model Motivation Program is one of four summer programs for high school and college students that focuses on enhancing individual strengths and reducing the barriers to medical school admission, according to Nanette Vega, executive director in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

“Our summer programs, fully funded by the Miller School, have been a cornerstone for promoting student diversity for more than three decades,” said Vega. “Our goal is to increase the diversity of the nation’s physicians, beginning with high school students who are thinking about careers in medicine.”

This summer, 85 students were selected from hundreds of applicants for the four Miami Model programs, which ran from June 3 to July 27, and included rigorous coursework and academic advising.

“Our programs are highly competitive, and we receive four times as many applications as we have positions,” said Vega.

In addition to working with Miller School faculty, students interact with UM college and medical students, who serve as teaching assistants.

Along with 25 college students and graduates in the Miami Model Motivation Program, the Miller School welcomed 25 Miami-

Dade County Public School students who had completed their junior year to the High School Careers in Medicine Workshop. A third program, the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) Preparation Program, offered class lectures, study tips, and test-taking strategies to prepare for the written portion of the exam. Those 25 participants also attended seminars, participated in a mock interview, and shadowed physicians at one of the University of Miami/Jackson Health System teaching hospitals.

The fourth Miami Model offering, The Center for Haitian Studies Students Training In Research (STIR) Program, provided 10 underrepresented students with an opportunity to work side by side with Miller School research scientists during the summer.

For Gutierrez, the Miami Model Motivation Program helped broaden his career horizons after he earned his bachelor's degree in human biology at Berkeley. After completing the program, he returned to California and became an emergency medical technician.

"When I came to Miami, I was able to connect with students with diverse backgrounds and viewpoints from all over the country," he said. "Now, I can draw on all those experiences as I pursue my dream of a career in medicine."