



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME Announces Second Class

Six more students accepted into medical education program that helps to address the pressing health concerns of the San Joaquin Valley

MERCED, Calif. — Six students, all with ties to the San Joaquin Valley, have been admitted to the UC Merced San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education (PRIME). The students have begun their first year of medical school with a two-day orientation at UC Merced and the UCSF Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research.

The second UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME cohort includes:

- Fabian Alberto, raised in Soledad and a UCLA graduate
- Karina Martinez Juarez, raised in Empire and a UC Davis graduate
- Filmon Solomon Mehanzel, of Tracy and a UCLA graduate
- Kristine Camille Leyba Ongaigui, of Fresno and a Stanford graduate
- Maricela Rangel-Garcia, raised in Fresno and Clovis and a UC Merced graduate
- Katy Lynn Ruch, of Fresno and a Fresno Pacific University graduate

Quick Facts

- Six students, all with ties to the San Joaquin Valley, have been admitted into the UC Merced San Joaquin Valley Program in Medical Education.
- UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME combines the strengths and resources of UC Davis School of Medicine, UCSF Fresno Medical Education Program and UC Merced to immediately respond to the region's need for more physicians.
- UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME currently has 11 students enrolled in the program.

With just 87 primary care physicians and 43 specialists per 100,000 people, the San Joaquin Valley is disproportionately affected by the state's physician shortage, according to a 2006 Central Valley Health Policy Institute report. The dire need for physicians in the region will only intensify in the future given the high rate of population growth in the Valley.

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Students admitted to UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME spend the first two years on the UC Davis campus in Sacramento with learning activities in the San Joaquin Valley. The third year is spent conducting clinical rotations in the Valley. Students have the option of completing all or part of their clinical electives in the Valley during the fourth year. The program represents the

most cost-effective and quickest way to ramp up medical education, integrated with health sciences research, in the Valley.

"Training the next generation of physicians who are committed to serving the San Joaquin Valley is the basis for UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME," said UC Merced Chancellor Dorothy Leland. "Thanks to our three-UC campus partnership, Valley students interested in becoming physicians now have a seamless path to realize their goals. The local pathway for obtaining an undergraduate degree, medical degree and residency training increases the likelihood that San Joaquin Valley-PRIME graduates will stay in the region to provide medical care for their family, friends and Valley neighbors."

The University of California system launched its Programs in Medical Education (PRIME) in 2004 to help address physician workforce shortages throughout California. UC PRIME consists of innovative medical education programs focused on meeting the healthcare needs of the state's medically underserved populations.

"Statistics show that physicians tend to practice near where they received their training," said Joan Voris, M.D., associate dean at UCSF Fresno. "Approximately 40 percent of UCSF Fresno graduating medical residents already remain in the Valley to

practice. The more training opportunities we are able to offer physicians in the Valley, the better positioned we are to retain them. Expansion of medical education and training that embraces cultural diversity and modern knowledge and resources, in particular, are essential to growing physicians to serve the Valley."

UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME is the sixth and latest addition to UC PRIME. UC Davis, UC Irvine, UCLA, UC San Diego and UCSF also have Programs in Medical Education.

Current funding for UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME allows up to six students to be admitted each year for the next three years. Ongoing financial support is necessary in order to sustain and grow the program in the future, which in turn will expand UC Merced's capacity to address Valley health care needs as well as continue the long-term goal of establishing an independently accredited medical school.

With the six students admitted this year and the five students admitted in the [inaugural cohort](#) last year, UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME currently has 11 students enrolled in the program.

"This class reflects the realization of the missions of PRIME, educating a diverse, professional work force who can serve the communities of California and improve both health care and population health," said Frederick J. Meyers, M.D., executive director of medical education and academic planning at UC Merced and executive associate dean at UC Davis School of Medicine. "These students could have chosen many other medical schools. We are proud to have attracted such a fine group who are committed to our program's success. We are confident that they, like the Valley 5, will make lasting contributions to the long-term success of the program."

Classes for all UC Merced San Joaquin Valley-PRIME students start Aug. 6.

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UC Merced opened Sept. 5, 2005, as the 10th campus in the University of California system and the first American research university of the 21st century. The campus significantly expands access to the UC system for students throughout the state, with a special mission to increase college-going rates among students in the San Joaquin Valley. It also serves as a major base of advanced research and as a stimulus to economic growth and diversification throughout the

region. Situated near Yosemite National Park, the university is expected to grow rapidly, topping out at about 25,000 students within 30 years.