

MERCED SUN-STAR

Conference will be geared toward aspiring Valley doctors

By Ana B. Ibarra

aibarra@mercedsunstar.com April 8, 2014 Updated 10 hours ago

The Central Valley Higher [EducationEducation](#) Consortium is taking a step forward in helping future doctors in the San Joaquin Valley achieve their educational goals.

The consortium is collaborating with Fresno State and UC Merced to put together the Reaching Out to Aspiring Doctors for the San Joaquin Valley conference, a comprehensive premedical convention on Sept. 27 at the UCSF Fresno Center for [Medical EducationMedical Education](#) and Research.

The ROAD conference was recently given a green light with the confirmation of a \$12,000 Health [CareersCareers](#) Training Program mini-grant, issued by the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development.

All students who are on premedical tracks at Fresno State and UC Merced will be invited to [applyapply](#) to attend the ROAD conference, and 160 will be selected.

The conference will consist of lectures, hands-on sessions, clinical skill labs and discussions with practicing physicians.

“This is a perfect example of higher educational institutions coming together to help students succeed as well as respond to a critical regional issue, in this case the shortage of physicians that exists in the San Joaquin Valley,” said Barbara Hioco, executive director of the consortium.

Cheri Cruz, associate director, said the long-term hope for the ROAD conference is that students will [completecomplete](#) their medical educations and provide culturally responsive care in the San Joaquin Valley.

According to the consortium, the number of practicing physicians in the San Joaquin Valley is 43 percent lower than the state average. By 2020 the Valley is expected to have a population of 4.9 million, which will require a significant increase in the number of practicing physicians.

Although all premed undergrads are able to [applyapply](#), students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are encouraged to participate, as the conference will try to address some of the obstacles these students face in paying for medical school, according to Brandy Nikaido, director of external relations and special projects at the UC Merced-Fresno Center.

“A lot of students in the Central Valley struggle with the concept of them being able to become a physician,” Nikaido said. “They come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds or are not aware of the resources available to pay for college and medical school. The goal is to remove the barriers so they can see this as a reality for themselves.”

Sun-Star staff writer Ana B. Ibarra can be reached at (209) -2486 or aibarra@mercedsunstar.com.

Read more here:

<http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2014/04/08/3591550/conference-will-be-g geared-toward.html?sp=/99/100/&ihp=1#storylink=cpy>