HCOP-COE Profiles of Success

Meet Santiago Lopez…

At the age of 3, Santiago moved with his family to Newark, New Jersey where they hoped one day their dreams of a better tomorrow would come true. Although both of his parents worked full time in order to pay for his education, Santiago’s dreams of one day becoming a physician remained intact. At the age of 16, Santiago began his pre-medical studies at Rutgers University. Under the guidance of his pre-medical advisor, he began to explore ways in which he could achieve his goals. He found that in the NERA MedPrep Program at the New Jersey Medical School. The program structure provided Santiago with everything he needed to know in order to pursue a career in medicine.

Three years later, at the age of 19, Santiago graduated from Rutgers University and was the first student accepted in to the New Jersey Medical School class of 2016. He truly believes that the NERA MedPrep Program was influential in the success he has attained thus far.

“The NERA program was instrumental to my success—both in college and as a humanitarian.”

About the Program

- The Health Careers Opportunity Programs (HCOP) are authorized under Title VII of the Public Health Service Act. Together with the Centers of Excellence (COE), HCOPs function to increase the representation of minority and disadvantaged students in the health professions.

- Program activities include an intense reading and science enrichment program during Phase 1 MCAT preparation during Phase 2 and research during Phase 3. Each phase is supplemented with clinical experiences.

- More information on the HCOP program activities is available on the program website:

  http://njms.umdnj.edu/education/ODACE/NERA/index.cfm

According to Santiago…

Attaining acceptance to medical school and becoming a physician was my primary goal ever since I could remember. This was not an easy path to follow; it was filled with many obstacles, challenges and hardships. Growing up in an ethnically diverse city of Newark, New Jersey, there was only one place where I could search for and find the support I would need to reach my goals; this place was the NERA MedPrep Program at the New Jersey Medical School. The NERA program was instrumental to my success both in college and as a humanitarian. The program gave me the tools to advance academically by offering science courses over the summer, a free MCAT prep course, and a chance to conduct research with faculty at the New Jersey Medical School. One of the legacies of NJMS is to teach humanism to all of its students and this was at the core of the HCOP program.

Gaining acceptance to the NJMS class of 2016 was no easy feat. However, the NERA program along with the Office of Special Program stood by me throughout the entire process, as they do for countless other students, and for this, I am very grateful.

For more information, contact: Association of American Medical Colleges, Government Relations
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See more Profiles of Success at: https://www.aamc.org/advocacy/hpnec/profiles.htm