Program Gets $1.4M Grant to Continue Helping Latinos Pursue Doctoral Degrees, Cancer Research

SAN ANTONIO (November 2015) – It motivated Andrew Jimenez to pursue a PhD “when it previously wasn’t a thought.”

It opened Jasmin Berrios’ eyes to new cancer research fields to study.

“It” is the Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training program at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Éxito! (English: Success!) recently received a $1.4 million grant from the National Cancer Institute to continue to offer its annual five-day summer institute, internships, and other activities from 2015-2020 to empower master’s-level students and health professionals—like Jimenez and Berrios—to pursue a doctoral degree and cancer research careers.

Of 101 Éxito! graduates since 2010, more than 30 percent have applied to doctoral programs and more than 20 percent are currently enrolled in a doctoral program.

“Our program is increasing the number of Latino doctors who study cancer control, which will increase the capacity to reduce cancer in this population,” said Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of Éxito! and the IHPR at the UT Health Science Center.

Latinos earn just 3.9 percent of all science and engineering doctoral degrees conferred, according to a 2015 report by the National Science Foundation.

Éxito!, which started in 2010, recruits master’s level students and professionals from across the country to take part in a five-day summer institute to provide motivation, skills and resources needed to take the next step in their education and apply for doctoral programs. The summer institute also brings Latino researchers and mentors to teach participants about cancer prevention, research, Latino cultural nuances, and career options.

Participants can apply for internships and doctoral support retreats, too.

“The hope is that participants go on to earn doctoral degrees and conduct novel research on why Latinos suffer worse outcomes from cancer and chronic disease,” Ramirez said.

Several past Éxito! graduates said the program provided motivation and support for applying for a doctoral degree.

“I had no one to talk with about the application process. Being a first-generation college graduate and master’s level graduate, I can’t get insight/guidance from family,” said Laura
Rubalcava of San Antonio, a 2011 Éxito! graduate. “It’s been inspiring to see people just like me overcome barriers and become successful in their fields.”

Éxito! is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio and includes: Amelie G. Ramirez (director), Kip Gallion (co-director), Rose Annie Treviño Treviño (project coordinator), and Cliff Despres (communications).

Go to www.exitotraining.org to learn more about the program, see more testimonials, and get details on applying for the 2016 Éxito! Summer Institute.

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For current news from the IHPR at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio, please visit our blog or follow us on Twitter @SaludToday.

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The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, one of the country’s leading health sciences universities, ranks in the top 3 percent of all institutions worldwide receiving federal funding. Research and other sponsored program activity totaled $228 million in fiscal year 2010. The university’s schools of medicine, nursing, dentistry, health professions and graduate biomedical sciences have produced approximately 26,000 graduates. The $744 million operating budget supports eight campuses in San Antonio, Laredo, Harlingen and Edinburg. For more information on the many ways “We make lives better®,” visit www.uthscsa.edu.

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and chronic disease among certain populations, including Latinos, in San Antonio, South Texas and the nation. The IHPR, founded in 2006, uses evidence-guided research, training and community outreach to improve the health of those at a disadvantage due to race/ethnicity or social determinants, such as education or income. Visit the IHPR online at http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu or follow its blog at http://www.saludtoday.com/blog.