Welcome!

We are proud to present our Winter Issue. In this issue, we have interviews from Dr. John Taborn, our PREP/RAP Life Skills Counselor, and David Tran, a RAP alumnus now in year one at UCLA DGSOM PRIME, a description of a student’s experiences in Liberia, and a detailed history of the Charles Drew Saturday Science Academy: a volunteer opportunity. In our Book Club, we review three interesting books, Another Day in the Frontal Lobe, Body of Work, and The Metamorphosis.

We hope you enjoy this issue!
-Editorial Staff

Important Dates! By Shonte McKenzie

AAMC Fee Assistance Program (FAP) to decrease the cost of the MCAT and AMCAS application. Now accepting applications for 2009. http://www.aamc.org/students/applying/fap


FAFSA Deadline March 1st, 2009

The Eli & Edythe Broad Center of Regenerative Medicine & Stem Cell Research and UCLA Extension presents Stem Cells: From Pluripotency to Tissue Regeneration Symposium
Date: February 27, 2009
Where: UCLA Lecture Auditorium, De Neve Plaza Commons
Time: 8:30a-4:30p

UC Post-Bacc Program Deadlines: https://meded-postbac.ucsd.edu
April 10, 2009—First Time Applicants
May 1, 2009—Reapplicants* - Priority
May 15, 2009—Reapplicants* - Final
*May vary by school.
Taborn then realized that "there existed many realities" and that he could make a difference.

John Gregory Taborn, PhD: Opening Doorways to Your Path

By: Nancy Carballo

If you are looking for a friendly ear or helping hand in the academic realm, make sure to stop by the UCLA Career Center to ask for Dr. John Taborn, Associate Director. This professional counselor was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota in a suburb named Golden Valley to two professional parents. His father worked as a Psychologist and Professor at the University of Minnesota where he was the Chair of Afro-American studies. His mother worked as a Social Worker/Administrator for students attending Minneapolis public schools, many of whom were economically and socially disadvantaged.

Like many PREP/RAP students, Taborn was not surrounded by ethnic diversity because the suburb was predominantly populated by Caucasian families and very few African Americans and Native Americans. However, as a native of Minneapolis, young Taborn was exposed to many biracial families. He began his philanthropic work during his junior high school years through his mother’s social service group, Jack and Jill of America. Because of national and regional conferences, he met other children of color and gained more exposure to others with similar backgrounds to his own upbringing. He feels this is where his calling began to help each person who seeks his advice to “become the strongest that they’d like to be.” This is his mantra to this day.

Growing up around a private practice of psychologists, young Taborn witnessed that a majority of African Americans from all backgrounds were having a hard time coping with daily life. He majored in psychology all the way throughout his academic career because he felt it was his "strength and calling" in the health field to provide educational counseling services. However, he was still interested in working with other medical professionals. While attending Lake Forest College for one quarter he became depressed due to feelings of disconnection from his family and culture. The small, private liberal arts college forty miles outside of Chicago, IL was an upscale elite neighborhood with no real access to Chicago itself.

After speaking with his parents, he transferred to the University of Minnesota. Though the university was too big (bigger than UCLA), interning at his dad’s office gave him real confidence to get involved in the career field as he tried out preceptorships with professionals. He likens this to the UCLA Career Center where the career development model consists of self-assessment followed by "experiential education.. Two years later, he transferred to the historically black college Howard University in DC, where many entering PREP/RAP students have attended and where some go on to the school of medicine. He was immersed in African American cultures from around the world: the Caribbean, Africa, Great Britain, and Latin American countries. He learned to pay attention to underrepresented populations in terms of having unique needs that are different from mainstream populations. Traditional courses were supplemented with researchers and teachers explaining what actually happens in the African American cultures or Latino cultures. Taborn then realized that "there existed many realities "and that he could make a difference.
Words of Inspiration For Aspiring PREP/RAP Students
by Dr. John Taborn

1. Everyone is deserving of love and respect for what it is that they have to offer to the world.
2. Tears are a reality in PREP/RAP as way of pressure release, a flushing and a catharsis. It's a way of watering other people's fears and giving them the opportunity to grow too.
3. Put yourself on your "board of directors" because your interests and values are important too, not just what others tell you to do.
4. Stay connected with your classmates as well as UCLA staff, particularly the Office of Academic Enrichment and Outreach Services.
5. You don't need a lot of money or education to inspire. Words or a pat on the back can be sufficient.
6. Try to experience as many paid or unpaid opportunities to make your path more meaningful. You might make a friend or two.
7. Have many mentors, not just one.
8. Don't be afraid to verbalize in class or with your friends. Your interests don't need to be targeted because people will begin to take notice and will make interesting offers such as fellowships. If you keep stuff inside or keep quiet, no one will know your passions.
9. There's power in groups. The PREP/RAP program can provide references for further studies.

Dr. Taborn enjoys academic diversity because he would rather try things in a new setting where he feels "educationally-safe" than to simply read about it. In fact, a running theme of his academic career is alternations between public and private schooling. In an effort experience an Ivy League education, Taborn enrolled at the graduate program at the University of Pennsylvania to obtain a Master's of Science and Education. He began focusing on college student development, career development and multiracial development. Furthermore, he dabbled in human sexuality courses, through which he learned that another key component about developing people and relationships is their sexuality.

Taborn's first job was at the University of Minnesota's Health Sciences Minority Program; a program similar to PREP/RAP, but whose target population was high school students. He learned the importance of giving students the validation and understanding that their ideas or dreams are doable. Thereafter, he was accepted into the PhD Counseling Psych Program at Howard University. He focused on African American psychology, particularly to help African Americans with career development and human development for their future fields of interest. Moreover, he wrote his dissertation on multiracial families. During his internships, he witnessed subtle differences within African American, Latino and Asian ethnicities. He learned that working with people from as many walks of life could make him a strong, effective psychologist. His pre-doctoral internship at the University of California Berkeley allowed him to specialize in career development. Asian staff taught Asian psychology. Hispanic staff taught Hispanic psychology. There was exposure to different populations, including LBGT studies.
Dr. Taborn (Continued from Page 3)

Dr. Taborn returned to the health field during his post-doctoral studies as a clinical psychologist at the University of Minnesota’s Medical School’s human sexuality clinic. In collaboration with a team of doctors, he worked with sex offenders, transgenders, LGBT clients, as well as general sexuality, relationship issues. He witnessed how psychology and medicine could overlap to help each person reach his or her recovery to functioning. Additionally, Dr. Taborn worked as a graduate counselor at Stanford University and Northwestern University, where he motivated and inspired students to develop skills that would help them achieve their academic goals.

A few years later, Patricia Pratt of UCLA’s Office of Academic Enrichment and Outreach approached Dr. Taborn to apprentice with Dr. William Parham, who was teaching the life skills management workshops for PREP/RAP. Dr. Taborn was quickly asked to fill the position upon Dr. Parham’s retirement. To this day, Dr. Taborn fondly expresses his love for working with Liz, Louise and the whole team to help develop PREP/RAP students. He feels that that the program’s desire to build confidence and to inspire, which is not found in other programs, allows him to keep within his personal goals.

Participants of the program may remember filling out the form “Sheet of Strengths vs. Challenges.” Common themes include the desire to develop a sense of resiliency as well as a need for validation that they are good, valuable people. By providing structure and support, the program allows students to feel that their “dreams and desires are real and doable, rather than imaginary or impossible.” Whatever his or her background may be, each member of the PREP/RAP family develops a shared sense of experience. Furthermore, even those who choose not to go to medical school find an answer that is real.

Participants may also remember an envelope full of thank you notes, an idea Dr. Taborn borrowed from Dr. Parham. In one of the workshops, a male once admitted that he had never had the experience of another male, who was a non-family member, saying something nice about him. This type of spiritual uplifting allows students to “reframe the past in a way that makes sense.” They realize that there are genuine people at UCLA who want to get to know you. Ultimately, PREP/RAP functions much like an internship or preceptorship at a large university.

Dr. Taborn believes that PREP/RAP students are fortunate to learn the value of collaborative work early on, through the summer program. Even with working with medical professionals. The summer program features not only coursework consisting of numerous test-taking strategies, but also confidence-building and therapeutic workshops based on team efforts. PREP/RAP students are encouraged to share however much they feel is comfortable, with the understanding that, as part of this new “academic family,” their privacy will be respected. Students are inspired to move forward in their academic pursuits with confidence, no matter how many doors have been closed off to them in the past. Because Dr. Taborn is now working on his California licensure while working full-time, he currently feels inspired by his own PREP/RAP students, who work while simultaneously meeting all of the scholarly and extracurricular demands of a competitive medical school applicant. In fact, he believes that “PREP/RAP students have all the gifts it takes to make it in any profession.”

If one were to read Dr. John Taborn’s already impressive and lengthy CV of accolades, one might be surprised to meet a man who welcomes visitors with respectful acceptance balanced by a charismatic sense of humor. He is a professional in every sense, yet his approachability makes one feel as if talking with a friend. He likes to rollerblade and travel, and listen to jazz music. His brother, Craig Taborn is a jazz recording artist in New York. If you stop by Dr. Taborn’s office, you just might be the recipient of the lyrics to “I Believe” by his favorite singer Chaka Khan. He might remind you to “never let the music out of your life” because it heals and inspires. And, best of all, he just might say the very words.

"Dreams and desires are real and doable, rather than imaginary or impossible.”

"The detours become a part of the whole person”

"PREP/RAP students have all the gifts it takes to make it in any profession.”

IMPA C T
Global Health Issue: Speaking for the Voiceless in Liberia

By Taylor Johnson

In the past 20 years, the United States has made numerous medical advancements, including gene therapy, the pacemaker and laser-eye treatment. Simultaneously a small country located in West Africa, called Liberia, endured a 14-year civil war that has left the country in immense economic and social devastation. Malnourishment, malaria, an HIV/AIDS epidemic, and contaminated water invade the villages and counties. Interestingly enough, both the United States and Liberia are similar in that they take pride in their freedom. In fact, Liberia is the first country in Africa to have complete independence and ideally it intended to serve as a model to other African nations. It is appalling that two countries that have similar ideals, hopes, political systems, and even flags are such polar opposites in respect to health care. It is obvious that a change needs to happen but oftentimes it is hard to know where to begin.

I am no different than most people. I was aware of the poverty in Africa, of the plummeting life expectancy in most African countries, and I proudly wore my red "INSP(RED)" shirt, but like most Americans, I put those disturbing visions and truths at the back of my mind. Last May, I had the opportunity to go to Liberia with a team of 13 students and adults from Point Loma Nazarene University. Although it was not a medically based trip, that did not prevent us from being thrust into a new kind of poverty and health depravity. When we arrived in Liberia and drove to our lodging location, we passed John F. Kennedy hospital, the only hospital in the country due to deterioration of 95% of health care facilities during the civil war. Furthermore, within Liberia the physician to patient ratio is approximately 1 to 178,950. It is no wonder why the life expectancy age for an average Liberian is 44 and that deaths are attributed to preventable diseases such as malaria, gastrointestinal problems and diarrhea.

My teammates and I experienced a whole other world and we learned so much from the people. We played soccer and other games with the kids, and I couldn't help but be saddened at the sight of their bulging bellies, yellow eyes and for some of them, the orange discoloration of their hair. The Liberian mantra is 'rice is life' and it is true, for it made up about 75% of our meals. Although rice and cassava is their staple food, it does not provide enough nutrients like protein. Consequently, it became a daily routine for the kids to fight over our unfinished water bottles at the end of the day, knowing that is was a rarity that they drank clean water.

The truth is hard to process and many of us began to wonder about the NGOs (Nongovernmental Organizations), the United Nations and other foreign aid organizations. The truth of the matter is that these outside sources are meant to offer relief and immediate resources but very rarely provide tools for development and rebuilding communities like Liberia. The United Nations' headquarters is in one of the largest buildings in Monrovia (the capital of Liberia) and they have a large presence and authority throughout the country, and yet they have not been able to make much progress. Amidst other non-profit organizations that donate mosquito nets, first aid kits and bags of rice, the situation has not significantly improved. The infant mortality rate is still roughly 2 per 10 babies, approximately 93% of Liberians do not have access to clean water, and many children do not have access to vaccinations for the measles and tuberculosis.
I learned that ending poverty and health disparities is complex and cannot be solved simply with money. It is going to take 10-15 years to begin to rebuild Liberia. What can be done is bringing awareness to the issue. This can be manifested in a variety of ways, but the goal is to welcome the discomfort. Hearing the statistics about Liberia, other parts of the world and in some parts of the U.S. should be unsettling, especially as current and future physicians, dentists and leaders in public health. The first step is to bring awareness and from there we can implement a change that will improve the lives of many for years to come.

Charles R. Drew University School of Medicine & Science:
Saturday Science Academy
An Opportunity for the Youth and an Opportunity for You
By Juliana Simon

On Saturday, January 17, 2009, Charles R. Drew University held its ninth annual Saturday Science Academy Two, Junior White Coat Ceremony. Dignitaries from around the southland filled the King Drew Gymnasium to support the hundreds of inspired youths in their endeavor for lifelong academic success. Established by Ms. Lorraine Grey, the Saturday Science Academy has provided a network for young students to gain an edge or in some cases level the academic playing field so that their opportunity for future success is enhanced.

Established in 1990, the Saturday Science Academy has served as a science, math and health-related field enrichment program to students predominantly of underserved communities. Communities that neighbor Charles R. Drew University carry heavy rates of poverty and gang-related crimes. The program serves as a pipeline for students from minority ethnicities and socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in preparing them for careers in the medical and healthcare fields. In many ways, it allows students to channel their energy into academics and provides mentorship and guidance for those who may otherwise not have such opportunities. The Saturday Science Academy has four annual sessions, held on Saturdays from 9am-12pm. In addition, students may enroll in after-class tutoring beginning at 12:30 pm.

Boasting a teacher to student ratio of approximately 1:5, the program gives ample attention to each student, yielding a high overall academic improvement rate. Several teacher assistants accompany each teacher as well. The teacher pool consists of medical and college students in addition to other graduate students. Teacher assistants are comprised of high school students mainly from the neighboring high schools. The first hour of class focuses on math improvement. The students are required to bring assigned math work from their regularly attended school. Teachers and assistants help children overcome challenging problems and give them a variety of techniques that make mathematics a more fun subject.

After the math component, the students engage themselves with various science or health related subjects. Activities include dissections, projects, reading and field trips. There is also private and group tutoring sessions available in the afternoons. Occasionally, field trips are taken to broaden student worldly perspective. The field trips depict a broader perspective on the topics that they may have discussed in their respective classrooms, and often create greater unity within program participants.
For over a decade, the Saturday Science Academy has given hope to youths in a world, which may at times seem hopeless. The relentless effort and guidance brought forth by Ms. Grey is evident every Saturday, and all of her students, child-parents, and society owe a debt of gratitude for this program and its help within the inner city. The program is a beacon of light, and for this, we salute you, Ms. Lorraine Grey.

For more information, visit: http://www.cdrewu.edu/pipeline-programs/saturday-science-academy/

Student Spotlight:

David Tran, MSI, UCLA PRIME
By Eriberto Perez

When often asked, “Why medicine?” David Tran reflects on his personal life story to answer this question. As a child growing up in a low income community, his family received governmental assistance for health care and throughout these early years he experienced firsthand how healthcare was disproportionately distributed within his community, in David’s words, “…people were not receiving the medical care that they needed.” But instead of dwelling on the lack of resources, David sees his childhood as a positive upbringing. His parents provided him with everything he needed and most importantly, instilled in him the value of education.

For David, aiding the underserved was a recurring passion as an undergrad at UCLA. He majored in Sociology and minored in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies and participated in numerous student internship programs. Early in his academic studies he did research that focused on the sociological aspect for the medically underserved; his honors thesis for sociology involved the worked he did when he volunteered with Aids Project Los Angeles (APLA) where he aided in providing resources such as housing and health assessments to people living with AIDS or HIV. Initially David Tran was unsuccessful on his first attempt to apply to medical school but within the following year he enrolled in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA Re-Application Program; there he found a support team that aiding him in strengthening his application and a support system among fellow RAP students to encourage one another during this process.

“I wanted to help the community and become a role model, an advocate for the community”
As a result of David’s endearing passion and hard work he is currently a first year medical student at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA in the UCLA PRIME Medical School Program and is president of the Medical Gay & Lesbian Organization (MedGLO) and serves on the executive board of the Student National Medical Association (SNMA). David saw that medicine was the correct path for him, not only because he would be able to provide help to the underserved, but also because medicine allowed him to continue learning throughout his career which was a value his family instilled in him, "It was personal choice, medicine can keep you on top of education. Education is a big thing in my family because it provides educational opportunities, you are always learning something new; it is related to helping others, working to help others and I feel that medicine can play a big role in that humanistic relationship." This was one of reasons David decided on attending the UCLA PRIME Medical School Program, "I knew that I wanted a program that provided the opportunity to work with the underserved and it was between CDU and PRIME, but I chose UCLA because PRIME had the mission statement leadership quality, creating leaders in the community..." David adds, "I wanted to help the community and become a role model, an advocate for the community, to show that you can achieve anything you want if you really work hard, I wanted to be that role model, to advocate for the community in such a way."

"Why medicine?"
David states, "It is difficult, but I don't see myself doing anything else."

The current UCLA PRIME Medical School Program class consists of 18 students committed to work with the underserved, 4 from The University of California, Riverside (UCR), 4 from the Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science (CDU) and the remaining 10 from the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA. Before medical school started, all 18 students attended a 3 week summer orientation to the PRIME program where they had the opportunity to become acquainted with one another. The main event during their summer orientation was the PRIME project where the group worked together on planning a community project. After much deliberation and discussion and taking into consideration time and resource constrains, the group decided to work with children and promote literacy. Their community project was established at the Renacimiento Community Center in Pomona. The group renovated one of the rooms in the center and made it into a play room and reading center for children. An existing teen room was converted to a resource center complete with SAT books and young adult novels. When it came time to open the rooms to the public a launch party was held with various stations such as face painting and reading for neighborhood children to enjoy. Most importantly a nutrition station that allowed children to explore and eat fruits was set up by the PRIME students in order to promote healthy food choices.

David is very happy to be in the first UCLA PRIME class and a unique experience David has felt in the PRIME program is its diversity, "We are all bringing different qualities to medical school, especially here, our class is really diverse. We have people of all different backgrounds and in that way you're contributing to what you are learning from each other." Afterword's when asked, "Why medicine?" David states, "It is difficult, but I don't see myself doing anything else."

For more information on the UCLA PRIME Medical School Program visit www.medsch.ucla.edu/uclaprime/
This book engages the reader in the science surrounding the human brain and the specialized physicians who operate on them. Dr. Katrina Firlik is one of the few female surgeons in a medical field where men are still a majority. She defines herself as a neurosurgeon who is “part scientist, part mechanic;” someone who makes a living by using her hands as the main tool in the opening of the skull and in cutting out cysts and tumors. As the title implies, Another Day in the Frontal Lobe is a vivid recount of how those who perform surgery on the brain feel, how they build up their expertise and what they come across on their daily lives. This book is a description of the neurosurgical profession, and an autobiography as well. Dr. Firlik describes her early years in a Cleveland, where she once dreamed of becoming a cleaning lady. Later on she mentions her father, a general surgeon, as the major influence who ultimately led her to choose neurosurgery as her profession. This book offers an interesting insight of the past, present, and future of neurosurgical science, and how this has been crucial in the improvement of many people’s lives.

Body of Work: Meditations on Mortality from the Human Anatomy Lab is a beautiful memoir of a medical student’s journey as a “doctor-in-training”. While the author explores the inner workings of her cadaver, named “Eve”, she opens the readers eyes her transition to the “detached concern” doctors must have as they save lives on a daily basis. The anatomical knowledge that she gains lays the foundation for understanding disease and in her words, “…our dismantling of the body gives birth to our ability to make the sick and broken body whole.” During this transformation from layperson to physician, she becomes personally and emotionally attached to the dead body she dissects and realizes this process prepares her for taking care of the living. Her personal life becomes infiltrated by medical knowledge as she begins to think like a medical doctor with her family and in everyday situations. The sacredness of the human body is clearly expressed by the author and her gratefulness to the “teachers” who donate their bodies to medicine is honored. Body of Work truly opened my eyes to the realities of medical school training and the emotional journey to be faced.

The Metamorphosis is a short story about a salesman who one morning awakens to find that he has been transformed into a “monstrous vermin” has anything to do with the health professions. Allegorical to the life of both medical and dental students, the protagonist, Gregory Samsa, undergoes a transformation in his life. This novel uncovers the effects that this has on his family and friends. Similar to many real-life experiences, their sudden disgust with him shows how oftentimes others cannot accept our successes. It is a relatively short read and a great insight into one of the early 20th century’s most influential novelists.
IMPACT is a newsletter by students, for students.

We highly encourage everyone to become involved and contribute to IMPACT. IMPACT is a newsletter that relies heavily on the contributions and participation of former PREP/RAP students. If we, at IMPACT, wish to continue our mission to encourage, educate, and empower pre-medical students and the community we strongly need your support.

The Editorial Board meets once every month. Upcoming meetings will be announced. All are welcome to attend. To contribute to IMPACT or to join the Editorial Board, please contact us at DGSOM.IMPACT@gmail.com

Resources

The Resources column is a forum intended for the sharing of research and information relevant to premedical students gathered by PREP & RAP Alumni. If you have any interesting websites you would like to share, please let us know:

**MCAT Information**

Sign up for this year’s MCAT or get answers to FAQs, at http://www.aamc.org/students/mcat/start.htm

**The Next Generation: An Introduction to Medicine** www.nextgenmd.org

**National Association of Advisors for the Health Professions** www.naahp.org

**AAMC’s Aspiring Doctors Website** www.aspiringdocs.com

**Association of American Medical Colleges**

Essential basic information about applying to medical school www.aamc.org

**American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine**

www.aacom.org

**Premedical Discussion Forums**

www.studentdoctor.net

**MCAT Mnemonics**

http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Union/5092/mnemMCAT.html
IMPACT
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Office of Academic Enrichment & Outreach
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

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