

## **The Stanford Medical Youth Science Program: Promoting Excellence and Equity for 20 years and Beyond**

*A brief history of the Stanford Medical Youth Science Program, 1987 to 2008*

In 1987, two bright-eyed, Stanford pre-medical students armed with the idea that they would save the world enlisted the support of a young professor new to Stanford by way of UC Berkeley. These undergraduate students envisioned a program that would focus on bright, low-income students from impoverished communities and struggling families. Recognizing that such a community existed in East Palo Alto, the trio went door-to-door recruiting students to participate in their pilot program. To their surprise, 7 high school students eagerly awaited the opportunity to be driven to campus daily to attend lectures and explore the campus. Although that year was rough and money was lean, the trio sought to expand their pilot program into a residential program to provide more students the opportunity to learn about science, medicine, and college life. In 1988, the program expanded to a summer residential program offered to 23 high school students from Northern California. After a few years, one brave soul thought it would be nice to know what the students did after they completed the summer program; hence alumni tracking began in 1990. As seasons changed, so did the direction of SMYSP ushering in the first executive director in 1997. With the executive director, the program began looking for long-term financial support. In 1998, an endowment was established that secured funding for SMYSP for 5 years. This generous donation was made possible by an individual who believed in the mission and vision of SMYSP.

In 2001, SMYSP created a school-based component for 11 Central Valley high schools focused on interest in science and college awareness for low-income and underrepresented high school students and was funded by the California Endowment. Additionally, the California Endowment supported replication efforts of the summer-residential program at UCSD School of Medicine for community college students. In 2003, the sustainability of SMYSP was in question until 5-year funding was secured from the National Institutes of Health. This new funding created our current school-based outreach program, which partners with 4 under-resourced high schools in Northern and Central California.

Students in our school-based program are taught community-based and public health research as well as provided college admissions guidance. As sustainability work was being done to ensure the summer-residential and school-based programs implementation, thoughts of forming an alumni association were being discussed amongst SMYSP leadership and a core group of alumni. As another form of sustainability, SMYSP published a book *Healing Journeys: Teaching Medicine, Nurturing Hope* in 2003 and the film "Opportunity of a Lifetime" in 2004. These marketing materials were used to generate awareness about SMYSP as well as donor support. With the foundation of creating an Alumni Association established by SMYSP leadership and an Operations Council, we next moved to create regional College Clusters in 2005. College Clusters serve as an opportunity for SMYSP alumni in California regions to network, identify university and community resources, inspire other students, and build leadership skills. In the spring of 2005, the Operations Council sought to encourage summer participant involvement in the College Clusters and participant interaction with counselors by initiating the creation of the Summer Staff Directory. Surveying past counselors similarly to past participants, the past counselor survey has allowed SMYSP as an organization to utilize all of their alumni as resources. In 2005, SMYSP leadership established the Access to Achievement Education Foundation. This non-profit foundation will allow SMYSP to initiate new support for our alumni and create new programs. In the long term, the Foundation will work to support, promote, and disseminate model programs that enhance educational achievement for low-income students interested in science and health.

Present day, with the existence of the non-profit Access to Education Achievement Foundation, a \$5 million endowment campaign has been initiated to help sustain SMYSP. A corner stone to the success of SMYSP has been its advisory board. The advisory board began as a steering committee in 1988 and has since grown into an active 11-member programmatic and fundraising board comprised of Stanford administrators and faculty as well as community members with expertise in law, philanthropy, volunteer activities, and development. Currently 36% of the board contributes financially to SMYSP. In addition to their personal financial contributions, the advisory board helped to launch our first official fundraising event hosted at the home of our board chair this past June. The event was a complete success establishing increased awareness and support for SMYSP. In May 2007, SMYSP received the Model of Excellence award from the College Board in recognition of outstanding dedication and service to the

educational development and academic success of low-income and underrepresented students. Also in May 2007, SMYSP's school-based program received an award for Best Project of the year with Oakland Tech's Health Academy from Oakland Unified School District Department of School-to-Career. In June 2007, SMYSP, along with 2 exceptional biomedical outreach programs within Stanford's School of medicine, received 3-year funding from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to create a new coordinated pre-college science education program in the School of Medicine. The Initiative will offer scientific training to high school students, with a special emphasis on low-income and ethnic minority students who are in great need of science education. On July 29, 2007, we held our 20th graduation ceremony for the new members of our family bringing our SMYSP alumni, including participants and summer staff total to 593.

During 2005, SMYSP leadership acknowledged they would have nearly 600 alumni by the end of the 2007 summer program. Wanting to build SMYSP alumni involvement in the organization, the leadership began brainstorming with alumni how they wanted the Alumni Association to be formed. In 2006, the Operations Council and SMYSP leadership decided it would be essential to have officers elected during SMYSP's upcoming Leadership Summit and Colloquium. This event celebrated SMYSP's 20-year reunion.