HIP MISSION AND VISION

HIP Mission: The Healthcare Interest Program (HIP) is a grassroots Denver Health pipeline that works to increase the success of underprivileged, underrepresented college students who are interested in careers in healthcare. HIP works with the University of Colorado Denver, Metropolitan State University of Denver, and Regis University of Denver to successfully matriculate these students into their commensurate training or graduate schools of choice. HIP is privileged to be able to utilize Denver Health providers and resources in providing specialized opportunities for said students who find themselves unable to overcome their own barriers towards successful matriculation.

HIP Vision: Understanding that healthcare outcomes are improved when there is cultural, social, ethnic, or racial congruency between provider and patient, HIP seeks to address healthcare inequity and disparity by increasing the number of underrepresented healthcare providers at Denver Health, in Denver County, and throughout Colorado.

Pictured left to right:
Rodrigo Banegas, MD (Mentor of the Year); Ahmad Karim (MSUD student, HIP class of 2018-2019)
ABOUT HIP

The Healthcare Interest Program (HIP) is a Denver Health grassroots mentorship program for UC Denver, MSU Denver, and Regis University undergraduate students from disadvantaged backgrounds interested in healthcare careers. Health disparities present a formidable challenge nationwide and in Denver County\(^1\). Our short-term goal is to empower undergraduate students at these universities, who often come from similar socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds as the diverse group of patients at Denver Health Hospital, to succeed in their education and pursue a healthcare career. The long-term goal of this mentorship program is to recruit these students to the University of Colorado post-graduate healthcare schools or other institutions, thereby fostering diverse community representation within our healthcare workforce, and, thus, helping to eventually close the healthcare equity gap.

HIP is a year-long internship program that also engages students in a robust, immersive, and comprehensive curriculum that goes beyond the classroom. Using best-practice principals and hands-on learning experiences, HIP students leave the program with more preparedness and tools to enter the next step in their healthcare career pursuits be it graduate school, PA school, Dentistry School, Nursing School, Medical School, OT/PT, Public Health, midwifery and beyond. Our goal is that HIP students finish their undergraduate degree armed with new, important skills that maximize their potential in their future professional life.

HIP begins by selecting a cohort who have passed a rigorous application and interview process. We then match each student with a complimentary mentor in his or her healthcare field of choice. From there, the students shadow this same provider for the entire year, forming a bond that usually lasts well beyond that first year, thus enabling the student to have a personal resource for answers to questions, help with personal hardships, and assistance throughout his or her healthcare education journey. Although mentoring was the pillar that HIP was initially built around, Dr. Romero O’Connell MD and Teresa O’Connell, Ed.S, with more than 26 years of teaching experience and curriculum-writing between them, developed curriculum that gives each student a further leg up in the healthcare journey.

HIP seminars are student-centered workshops that focus on everything from test-prep to book club based around non-fiction healthcare equity books, mock-trails, Socratic seminars, and presentations from leading industry healthcare professionals that integrate classroom learning or educate on healthcare inequity. Classroom didactics are interspersed with leadership training, professionalism, team-building within the cohort of students, and community service opportunities.

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The Healthcare Interest Program prides itself on not only producing students who are ready not only to pursue higher level healthcare degrees such as RN, MD, PhD, DO, DDS, and the like, but also by helping students enter more immediately the working world of medicine as healthcare professionals in fields such as midwifery, CNA/MA, phlebotomy, patient navigators, medical clerks, scribes, and more.

HIP has served a total of 208 students since its founding in 2008 starting with a class of just 10 students. HIP now boasts a much larger cohort over double its starting size.

Of the students polled, 100% finished the HIP program with higher GPAs than when they started. More than 87% of students polled are either currently enrolled in school, still pursuing healthcare careers, OR are currently working in a healthcare field. Seventy-six percent of students who have participated in HIP have graduated from undergraduate degree programs (this figure does not include students who are currently pursing undergraduate degrees). In addition, more than 58% of HIP graduates have received a higher-level degree, or are currently in the process of earning a higher-level degree.
2020 CURRICULUM RESOURCES

JUST LIKE US
THE TRUE STORY OF FOUR MEXICAN GIRLS COMING OF AGE IN AMERICA
HELEN THORPE

INSANE
AMERICA’S CRIMINAL TREATMENT OF MENTAL ILLNESS
ALISA ROTH

MAMA MIGHT BE BETTER OFF DEAD
LAURIE KAYE ABRAHAM

THE LINE BECOMES A RIVER
DISPATCHES FROM THE BORDER
FRANCISCO CANTÚ

I SHALL NOT HATE
A GAZA DOCTOR’S JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO PEACE AND HUMAN DIGNITY
IZZELDIN ABUELAISH

RESILIENCE
THE BIOLOGY OF STRESS & THE SCIENCE OF HOPE
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL EDITION

SPLIT HORN
LIFE OF A HOANG SHAKAM IN AMERICA

THE SPIRIT CATCHES YOU AND YOU FALL DOWN
A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures
ANNE FADiman

MOUNTAINS BEYOND MOUNTAINS
THE QUEST OF DR. PAUL FARMER, A MAN WHO WOULD CURE THE WORLD
REBECCA SKLOOT

DISCOVER YOUR CLIFTONSTRENGTHS
DON CLIFTON

STRENGTHSFINDER 2.0
FROM GALLUP
AND TOM ROTH

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

THE IMMORTAL LIFE OF HENRIETTA LACKS
DOCTORS TOOK HER CELLS WITHOUT ASKING. THOSE CELLS NEVER DIED. THEY LAUNCHED A MEDICAL REVOLUTION AND A MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY. MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS LATER, HER CHILDREN FOUND OUT. THEIR LIVES WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME.
REBECCA SKLOOT
HIP Featured in Denver Health's 411

Program Prepares Minority Students for Health Careers

Dozens of students made their first stitches last week at Denver Health. The suture lab was part of a year-long program that prepares low-income and ethnic minority college students for careers in health care.

Judy Tran, 20 (pictured in the striped shirt), has spent countless days and nights at Denver Health. Her father, who passed away last year, was hospitalized here for months at a time due to strokes and high blood pressure. Her younger brother, who suffers from epilepsy, is also a patient. While taking care of her dad, she discovered a passion — and now wants to provide care for people in her career. Denver Health is helping her to embrace that dream through the Healthcare Interest Program (HIP). The Denver Health program includes shadowing, mentoring, seminars, workshops, career coaching and test preparation.

Tran, a biology major at CU Denver, is one of 28 students currently participating. Many of them develop close bonds with their mentors. Tran’s mentor, Dr. Kelly Ferraro (pictured fourth from the left), welcomed Tran and her family to join her Thanksgiving gathering. “I really respect and admire the people who work here,” Tran said. “I appreciate how they care for patients and how they support students. The program is giving me an opportunity I never would have had.” In the program’s ten years, it has propelled dozens of students into health care careers and medical, nursing, dental, pharmacy, and physician assistant schools. HIP needs Denver Health providers who are willing to let undergraduate students shadow them for four hours or more in March or April. Email Teresa.Oconnell@dhha.org if you are interested. Here’s a program brochure.
My name is Khai Nguyen, I am a recent graduate from the Healthcare Interest Program (HIP) 2018-2019 cohort, and I will be entering my first year of Dental School in the fall of 2019. I wanted to inform you how HIP has impacted me as a pre-health student and how their lectures and mentorships have motivated me to become compassionate, appreciative, and empathetic as a dentist and as a role model.

Two aspects of HIP that enriched my knowledge in healthcare disparities were Books to Bedside and Health Equity Lectures. One of my favorite Books to Bedside was Dr. Liz Kvach’s topic on transgender care. Her lecture was memorable because our knowledge of how to approach and cooperate with individuals from the LGBTQ+ community were challenged. This lecture encouraged us to find different ways to better treat our patients without offending their identity. We, as interns, had numerous agreements and disagreements in different scenarios, but we all wanted to determine the best resolution for them as friends, schoolteachers, or healthcare providers. Next, one of my favorite Health Equity Lectures was Dr. Nussbaum, Dr. Rissman, and Dr. Vitello’s discussion on male mental health and suicide. Males, especially adult men or fathers, were under heavy pressure where they must be masculine, must always succeed and never fail, and must never become emotional. These criterias are detrimental to men’s mental health, can lead to depression, and reduce their quality of life. But according to Dr. Nussbaum, they were better as role models if they shared their emotions instead of bottling them up. Both lectures allowed me to understand how important it is to never assume one’s circumstance, and it is important to understand their struggle from their point of view. It allowed me to become more compassionate and empathetic whenever I encounter a patient who has a completely different background than me.

As a HIP intern, I have had the privilege of shadowing Dr. Pham and her office Denver Health Montbello Dental clinic. There are many experiences I wanted to carry with me from the entire team. For example, I was moved by how appreciative the entire dental clinic were for the translators. Every time the patient agreed to use Denver Health’s translating service, one employee — Ileena — would write down the translators’ names onto her list of translators. Once a year, they would send out cookies to those who have translated for their patients to demonstrate their gratitude. Their actions showed me how easy, but effective it is to show your appreciation. Even though they never met them, Dr. Pham and her entire office taught me how important it is to value and appreciate anyone who have contributed to the clinic’s success.

Thank you for your time in learning how HIP has positively impacted me as a pre-dental student. If it wasn’t for Dr. Connell and Ms. O’Connell, I may never have surrounded myself with other interns where we all strive to improve healthcare access to underserved communities.

Sincerely, Khai Nguyen
HIP Cohort 2018-2019

***Khai was accepted into University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine beginning in the fall of 2019***
An Experience That Saved Me

I was in my sophomore year at Regis University when I wrecked my ATV and acquired a TBI. I had already declared myself as a biochemistry major but I was struggling with my studies because I couldn’t retain any information since my accident. I had lost all hope and faith in myself that I could finish this degree and yet alone make it to Medical School. That was until I found the Denver Health HIP Program.

I have never been so grateful in my life for the opportunity to participate in a program like this. The individuals that run HIP are amazing and work hard to make the program what it is. I have never met anyone who has so much compassion and love for other people. The people in HIP truly changed my life and got me back on my feet. I believe that this program was my stepping stool. I received so much support and help to overcome the symptoms of my TBI. I believe that I would not of gotten all the help I did if I wasn’t with this program. I was able to receive connections to Nero teams that I needed to make sure that my physical health was taken care of. They literally put me back on my two feet.

I never thought that after my accident that I was going to make it to Med. School. However, the amount of inspiration and support that I received was incredible. I am now a year away from graduating with my biochemistry degree as well as prepping for medical school. I have learned so much about myself and the health care.

Denver Health is such a great hospital I was able to find my path in health care. I am now looking forward to being an Orthopedic surgeon. I wouldn’t have gotten this far or even known about what I wanted if it wasn’t for this program or the people who run it. I think that the most important thing that I am so grateful for from HIP was the friendship. Before I came into the program I hadn’t really connected with a lot of people. However, now I have made lifelong friends and who will support me throughout my whole life. I couldn’t be anymore blessed for the people and this program.

Thank you.

Brianna Marez
HIP Cohort 2018-2019
My healthcare mentor asking me about my personal and career goals and what I hope to learn from shadowing him, experts in the medical fields coming to HIP meeting to teach me and my class about their expertise, the HIP manager setting aside time outside of the HIP meeting to help me edit my personal statement, and the HIP instructor hugging me to welcome me to the program. These are some of the memories that crossed my mind when I think about HIP. Signing up for HIP was one of the best decisions I have made. From HIP, I gained a knowledgeable career mentor, two supportive life advisors, some colleagues that I can now call friends and many unforgettable memories.

Before shadowing my healthcare mentor, he wanted us to meet and discuss my personal and career goals. Little did I know that he would arrive at our meeting in a motorcycle and that we would end up getting lunch at McDonald. He makes it very easy for me to be myself, talk to him, and ask questions. It was not until my first day of shadowing him that I’ve realized how much I can learn from him. On the first day that I shadowed him, a patient of his took the effort to come to his office just to say hi. This might not seem significant, but it is. It showed me who he is as a healthcare provider; it showed me the trust that he had established with your patients and the compassion that he had shown them. It inspired me to have that kind of relationship with my patients in the future and to always show that kind of compassion, regardless of whichever career field I ended up pursuing.

Attending HIP Kick-Off is mandatory for every student participating in HIP. It is an event that welcomes the students to the program. I walked in, feeling out of place when a white-haired lady approached me, asked me for my name, and hugged me. I’ve come to realize afterward that she is the faculty instructor of HIP. The faculty instructor and the manager of HIP further make me feel welcome when they give me a journal, were the first page of the journal quoted Christopher Reeve, “A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to preserve and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles,” followed by a message from the faculty instructor and the manager of HIP, “Thank you for allowing us to help you on your path to medicine. We are excited to see the kind of hero you will become.” Everything on the first page of hand-written and each student’s journal have a different quote with a different message. The sincerity behind these actions touched my heart. However, these actions were only the first of many. I will never forget their lesson on professionalism, their willingness to help us with anything and everything, manager’s willingness of to help me with my personal statement for pharmacy school admission, her time and effort in helping me edit my application, the instructor’s many guidance and the time we spent playing games together at their house. Now, whenever I feel like I am not good enough and get discouraged, I would see the instructor in my head, saying, “Be bold!” and I would remember the manager telling us that the reason for why we were chosen to participate in HIP was because they saw potential in all of us. To me, they were not just the instructor and manager of HIP, they are also my life advisors. They’ve inspired me to take actions, to have courage, and to be the best version of myself.

From HIP, I’ve also gained the opportunity to meet many wonderful colleagues whom I can now call friends. They are all very friendly, extremely driven, and very inspirational. When we participate in Healing Circle, I’ve noticed for the first time that even though we are all different, we can all relate to the same struggle. Being with them had allowed me to see things from different perspectives, inspired me to be more open-minded and understanding, and it had motivated me to work harder to accomplish my goals.

I’ve learned and gained so much from participating in HIP and I hope that other students would get the opportunity to experience that same thing.

Nhu Ho
HIP Cohort 2018-2019

***Nhu Ho was accepted into CU Skaggs Pharmacy school beginning in the fall of 2019***
The Healthcare Interest Program (HIP) was a huge stepping stone to where I am today and where I am headed. Before becoming a part of the program, I was unsure about what health career I wanted to go into and how I would fit in this dynamic healthcare system. I was lucky enough to be paired up with a mentor who was both open-minded and eager to help me navigate towards a career in healthcare. Through the program, I got to shadow various healthcare providers and attend health equity lectures by distinguished speakers. I got to connect with students from a diverse background and talk about our aspirations and push each other to be the next leaders and servants within our communities. Ultimately, these experiences funneled me into considering dentistry as a career. I was able to fully immerse myself within dentistry as I got to shadow within various clinics at Denver Health, from general dental clinics to oral surgery clinics. HIP also helped me take the next step into becoming a community leader one day by allowing me to be a part of a non-profit organization (SHIPs) which seeks to address the needs within underserved communities such as food, tutoring, and mentorship. I am a first-generation student and with that one of my biggest barriers was trying to navigate the educational system here in the U.S and the path to a healthcare professional school. Through HIP I was able to make connections and I can without a doubt say that HIP was a huge factor in my acceptance to many top dental schools this past application cycle.

Patrick Mugabe
HIP Cohort 2017-2018

***Patrick Mugabe will be attending University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine in the fall of 2019

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The Healthcare Interest Program (HIP) had and continues to have a dramatic impact on my life. As a first-generation college student, I did not have help from my family in how to navigate college, especially having a goal of becoming a medical professional. HIP aids its participants in navigating the path to graduate school by providing resources like practice essays, mock interviews, and application reviews to prepare for the rigorous application process. Their intimate knowledge of this process provides a distinct edge for those who complete the program. HIP also helped me solidify my decision to become a Physician Assistant by providing me opportunities to work with and learn from multiple disciplines within the medical field. These opportunities included guest lectures, shadowing, and internships that would have been impossible to come by without being part of this wonderful program. The experience of interacting with surgeons, nurses, pharmacists, and many other professionals showed me that while there are countless career paths in medicine, my ultimate decision to pursue being a physician assistant was the correct path.

As an immigrant, I, at times, felt underrepresented and lost within the education system. HIP introduced me to many other cultures and students who were in a similar situation. We bonded over and learned from our different backgrounds all while making lifelong friends. This made me feel more included, relevant, and confident than I had been since coming to the United States.

All these benefits were provided to me at no cost other than my time and giving my best. The lessons learned, relationships created, and self-confidence I gained will forever be with me. This program had such a large impact for me and I hope that it will continue to help students on their path to the medical field.

Eskeila Martin
HIP Cohort 2016-2017
Teresa O’Connell is a Colorado native raised in Colorado Springs. After completing her BA in English at DU while on a full-ride swimming scholarship, she went on to attend UC Denver where she received her Ed. S in Educational Psychology with a concentration in secondary English education.

Teresa has been a Colorado professionally licensed educator since 2010 and has taught English language arts, reading, theater, and writing across grades 6-12 in Cherry Creek, Douglas County, Adams 12, Thornton, and Jeffco school districts. While in Douglas County Schools, in addition to teaching 7th grade English Language Arts, Teresa created and ran STEM’s High School athletics program as Athletic Director. She left after being recruited by a local country club to design, create, and oversee of a first-of-its-kind Youth Program for children from 6 months of age to 18 years.

Teresa moved to Denver Health where she currently works as the program manager of the Healthcare Interest Program. She is also the co-founder and co-director of a non-profit organization called the Student Health Investment Partnership, or SHIPs that works to enter communities experiencing marginalization in any social determinant of health and help them thrive in their unique challenges. We are committed to addressing healthcare inequity, inequality, and disparity for the good of all.

Josina O’Connell-Romero was born in Santa Fe New Mexico to a Latina Mother and Latino Father. After 2 years at University of New Mexico, she transferred to Colorado College where she received a degree in Pre-Med Biology. However, after being told by her pre-med advisor she would never make it into med school, she married college sweetheart and continued on to get her MA in Science Education from Colorado College. For 17 years thereafter, she taught secondary science in Colorado while raising 3 beautiful children. At the age of 40, she decided it was time to pursue her career of becoming a doctor, and quit it all. She worked as a CNA to gain experience, and at age 43, she was denied admission to CU SOM, however she was accepted into the CU SOM post back program. After successfully completing the post back program at the age of 44, she started med school taking 4.5 years to graduate. While in med school, she founded the SABES program at the SOM to incorporate Spanish language education at the SOM where it has since become an elective and has spawned SABES II.

After graduating med school, she practiced 1 year at Salud in Commerce City; then in 2014, moved to Denver Health, Westwood clinic. She was also hired as an assistant professor of medicine at the SOM during this time. In 2015 Dr. O’Connell-Romero was hired by Dr. Lilia Cervantes as associate director of the Healthcare Interest Program to revitalize the program and grow it.

She is currently the adjunct faculty at UCD, MSUD, and Regis for HIP, and became director of HIP 2018. In addition to working as the HIP director, practicing medicine at Montbello Clinic, and serving as assistant faculty at the SOM, Dr. O’Connell-Romero became Colorado AHEC Executive Director January 1, 2019.
The Healthcare Interest Program (HIP) is supported entirely by partnerships from our generous University Partners (MSU Denver, CU Denver, and Regis University). The to keep the HIP running is around $5,000 per year per student. We would love to be able to give more students at any local university the support and opportunity the need to pursue their healthcare dreams- we are only limited by the amount of funding we receive. With additional funding, the HIP hopes to expand our program's offerings by: bringing in a part-time mental health worker for our students to utilize without cost to them; hiring wellness professionals to help the students with stress management and physical activity to improve their overall health: expanding the length of the program to two years instead of one; providing each student with an individualized testing bank and study course to prepare them for their specific entrance exam; offering scholarships to students in need for food, housing, school, and emergency expenses; paying for more labs for additional hands-on experiences; and finally being able to pay for the training for every HIP student to leave the program with a real-world, marketable skill set and certification of their choice in such fields as phlebotomy, CNA, EMT, MA or radiology so they can work in a hospital, gaining the experience and skills they will need for their applications and as future healthcare providers.

Currently we are looking for donations and gifts anywhere from $5 to $50,000 and beyond to ensure the future of HIP and to grow the program to its full potential.

**PHILANTHROPIC GIFTS**  
Cash, stocks or multi-year pledges  
- Provide a charitable donation or make an undesignated gift to the area of greatest need  
- Sponsor a specific student with a scholarship  
- Opportunities for name recognition and brand visibility available

**UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS**  
One-year or multi-year contracts available  
Partner with Denver Health and the Healthcare Interest Program to provide your students with a once-in-a-life internship opportunity that will provide the support they need to be successful in any healthcare career

**LEGACY GIFTS**  
Wills and trusts, bequest, or life-insurance  
Consider the Healthcare Interest Program in your estate plans

If you are a healthcare professional, social justice warrior, or have a relevant skill to share with our HIP undergraduate students (such as test taking strategies, interview skills, etc..), and are looking for additional ways to get involved, please email teresa.oconnell@dhha.org for more information and to donate your time.

**You can:**
- Become a mentor  
- Host a student for a day  
- Host a field trip  
- Be a guest lecturer

Please reach out to Teresa O’Connell at teresa.o’connell@dhha.org if you are interested in making a donation, gift, or if your college or university would like to partner with HIP.
HIP IN ACTION 2019-2020