

For Immediate Release

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Social Justice Biomedical Research Training Program BUILD PODER Seeks New Students for Fall 2017 Cohort to apply by March 3 Deadline

(NORTHRIDGE, Calif., Feb. 20, 2017) — California State University, Northridge's successful social justice-based undergraduate biomedical research training program BUILD PODER is recruiting 75 new students for its third cohort, who will enter the program this summer.

Students majoring in the biological, life, health, physical and social sciences as well as engineering, computer science and math, who are pursuing careers in biomedical research can apply [online](#) by 5 p.m. on March 3.

The program offers research training, faculty mentorship, and financial assistance — it pays for 60 percent of participants' tuition, grants priority registration and provides \$8,600-\$12,100 in paid faculty-mentored research, travel and research funds, free tutoring, a GRE prep course and funds to present at national academic conferences.

BUILD PODER, which stands for Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD) Promoting Opportunities for Diversity in Education and Research (PODER), was established at CSUN in 2014 with a \$22 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. CSUN is one of 10 BUILD sites across the nation immersing students in biomedical research, which is defined as the broad area of science that looks for ways to prevent and treat diseases causing illness and death in people and animals. At CSUN, this definition is expanded to include research that focuses on health and reducing health disparities.

CSUN's BUILD program is also unique in that it is based on critical race theory (CRT), which examines how implicit racism can shape the lives of people of color and how it plays out in their daily experiences. BUILD PODER uses CRT as the foundation for faculty mentor training, to help faculty understand and better relate to students from communities that differ from their own. CRT also guides the Summer Jumpstart research preparation program and all student training to prepare students for graduate programs, most of which are less diverse than CSUN.

Gabriela Chavira '94 (Psychology/Chicano Studies), who is a principal investigator of the grant and serves as the program director for the student training core, said the program's focus on social justice empowers the students to make direct impacts on their own lives.

"By increasing the number of students from traditionally underrepresented groups who enter research careers, we are allowing them to reduce the health disparities in their own communities," Chavira said. "We have faculty, program staff, tutors, coaches, and students all there to help students succeed. This is especially important for first-generation college students, who often lack the knowledge and skills on how to prepare for their future careers."



BUILD PODER students present at the 2016 CSUN Student Research and Creative Works Symposium.

The program is open to full-time sophomores and juniors who have a GPA of 3.0 or higher and have two to three years remaining in their degree programs. Applicants must be U.S. citizens, nationals or permanent residents. Though the program especially encourages members from underrepresented groups, based on race and ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic disadvantage to apply, anyone outside of these groups are welcome to apply as well.

Applicants must provide two letters of recommendation and answer four short-essay questions.

Accepted applicants must attend a four-week Summer Jumpstart research program this summer and devote nine to 11 hours per week to research during the fall semester, plus other course requirements. Each applicant must choose a research project to work on with their faculty advisor.

Senior Gabriela Rivera, a second-year BUILD scholar who majors in public health, said she had no idea what research involved before she joined the program. In her first year, Rivera researched myths about health services for the elderly in the Latino community. Currently, she is researching what kind of health complications that LGBT individuals experience after coming out and how they navigate health resources. Last summer, Rivera completed a research internship at the University of California, Santa Barbara at their Chicano Studies Institute.

Rivera said the program pushed her onto a path towards graduate education and a successful career.

“I feel like I’ve had immense growth in my professional development and I am more confident to go network with faculty and explore other universities,” Rivera said. “When I was a freshman I knew I wanted to do epidemiology, but I didn’t know if I wanted to get a master’s degree. This program solidified that I could and should do it.”

Adriana Mendez, graduating senior and BUILD scholar majoring in sociology with an emphasis in criminal justice, is currently researching how minorities cope with stereotype threat in stress-induced situations. Mendez said she enjoys the professional and personal support she receives through the program.

“My mentors helped me see my own ability — they are always available to talk and genuinely want to see me succeed,” Mendez said. “BUILD is also a community. The people you meet, the friends you make, they experience the same stresses that you do and you end up bonding. They become your family.”

Graduating senior and biology major Calvin Apodaca, also a BUILD scholar, is using research opportunities to bring together his acumen in biological science as well as computer programming and coding. In his first year, Apodaca worked on building a mobile app that can help those who have lost control of most of their bodily functions communicate by blinking. This year, he is working on a computer program that simulates the interaction of DNA, as well as another project using 3D printing to develop slides that scientists can use when studying the guts of flies.

Apodaca was recently accepted to a doctoral program at the University of Washington and will study biomedical and health care informatics. Inspired by his personal experience spending three years in a hospital, Apodaca wants to make health data more accessible to patients so they can make informed healthcare decisions based on their own data.

For Apodaca, who is the first in his family to pursue a graduate degree, BUILD PODER opened doors that he never thought were possible to access. He encourages any students in the sciences who wants to have an impact on the world to apply to the program.

“If you really want to be the change you want to see in the world, then being a scientist is probably the best way to do that,” Apodaca said. “You impact the world around you if you can show the truth by putting it down on paper and proving it. And BUILD can make that possible.”

Students can apply by 5 p.m. on March 3 online at <http://www.csun.edu/build-poder/applicants>. For more information, email buildpoder@csun.edu or call 818-677-4863.

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Other information

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****Specifics on underrepresented groups****

- Racial and ethnic groups include African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders.
- Individuals with disabilities are defined as those with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- Individuals with disadvantaged backgrounds include those whose families have an annual income below established low-income thresholds, and those who come from social, cultural, or educational environments that have made it challenging to obtain the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to develop and participate in a research career, such as that found in certain rural or inner-city environments.

Acceptable Majors:

Biological and Life Sciences: Anatomy; animal biology (zoology); biochemistry; biophysics; biology (general); biosciences; ecology & evolutionary biology; endocrinology; entomology & parasitology; genetics; microbiology; microbiology, immunology, & virology; molecular, cellular & developmental biology; neurobiology/neuroscience; pathology; pharmacology; physiology.

Engineering: Biological/agricultural engineering; biomedical engineering; chemical engineering; chemical, biochemical & environmental engineering; computer engineering & computer science, computer science & electrical engineering; electrical engineering; engineering & technology management; mechanical & aerospace engineering; mechanical & materials engineering; transportation & urban infrastructure engineering.

Health Professions: Anesthesiology; biometry & epidemiology; cardiology; child & adolescent development; clinical medicine, communication disorders sciences; dental sciences; environmental & occupational health engineering; family consumer sciences (dietetics & nutrition); health care/services administration; health education (fitness, physical education, sports psychology); health sciences; hematology; kinesiology (kinesiotherapy, exercise science); medical technologies/technicians; neurology; nursing; obstetrics & gynecology; oncology/cancer research; ophthalmology; otorhinolaryngology; pediatrics; pharmacy/pharmaceutical sciences; physical therapy; preventative medicine & community health; psychiatry; public health/community health (health communication, community development); pulmonary disease; radiology; surgery; veterinary sciences

Physical Science: Atmospheric sciences; biochemical sciences; biophysics; chemistry; chemistry and biochemistry; environmental sciences; geography; geography & environmental sciences; geological or earth sciences; marine biotechnology; medicinal chemistry; physics; physics and astronomy Social Science: Anthropology (cultural & social); clinical psychology; human development; psychology; sociology; sociology/anthropology;

Other: Computer science; Information systems; mathematics & statistics