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Students get insider's look at the health-care profession

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TIF students Sherlanda Auguste, Samantha Rodriguez, Hannah Hernandez and Diosili Salazar at Florida State University College of Medicine Summer Institute.

COURTESY PHOTO

Sixteen-year-old Sherlanda Auguste was in the operating room but was too short to see the procedure taking place at Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare a few weeks ago. Someone gave her a stool to stand on so the 5-foot-tall Immokalee high school student, a Take Stock in Children Pathways to Success scholarship recipient from The Immokalee Foundation, could witness the cardiovascular surgery.

That was just one way Ms. Auguste and other TIF students from Immokalee High School got a boost toward their future careers through the Florida State University College of Medicine Summer Institute. Diosili Salazar, Hannah Hernandez and Samantha Rodriguez also attended the weeklong program in Tallahassee.

Designed to provide an inside look at the life of a medical student and a medical practitioner, the Summer Institute requires a rising junior or senior to have at least a 3.3 GPA, write an essay, furnish letters of recommendation from teachers and show achievement in collegepreparatory science and math courses. Participants shadow physicians, participate in lectures and workshops given by the FSU medical faculty, attend sessions on test preparation and medical ethics and take part in a research project on a health topic.

This year's students role-played medical dilemmas, learned about problems particular to rural areas and childhood obesity and met simulated "patients" in a clinical setting using

sophisticated medical dummies.



"Having this experience changed my life greatly," Ms. Salazar says. "I was surprised the profession isn't about money but about the lives you change in every small way." Learning about geriatrics from a man who finds joy in helping the elderly in retirement homes helped her come to understand the true passion in medicine, she adds.

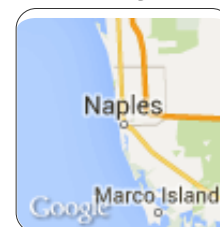
FSU's SSTRIDE Summer Institute (Science Students Together Reaching Instructional Diversity and Excellence) arose from the awareness of the need for diversity among medical school applicants. Founded in 1994, the institute exists to address this challenge and recognizes that the need for physicians particularly in rural and low-income areas is increasing.

That's one reason Elda Hernandez, TIF program services manager, was so cheered by the students' reactions to their week as "medical students."

"After going to a nursing home and seeing how elderly people need a lot of assistance, two of our students would like to build a nursing home in Immokalee," Ms. Hernandez says. "They left a small agricultural community to live in college dorms and learn about the medical field. Each one of them had already started planning their career path, but after this experience, they are working on new and improved paths that meet their passion."

Hannah Hernandez, 17, had been thinking about becoming an oncology nurse, but now she's considering a career in surgery. Among other experiences, she watched an operation to remove a bone spur from a woman's heel. "I was saying, 'Oh my gosh, oh my gosh,' at first, but it became normal, like watching TV," she says.

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Her fellow student Ms. Auguste found out visiting the cadaver lab was something she could take in stride. "Some people were a little queasy," she says. "I was fascinated by it."

Visiting a nursing home also made a big impact on Ms. Rodriguez, 15. "I like the feeling of helping others out," she says. "Knowing I'm making a difference makes me feel better about myself." |

– The Immokalee Foundation provides a range of education programs that focus on building pathways to success through college and post-secondary preparation and support, mentoring and tutoring, opportunities for broadening experiences and life skills development leading to economic independence. To learn more about TIF, including how to volunteer as a mentor, call 430- 9122 or visit immokaleefoundation.org.



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