

## First-hand Education for Health Care Students Leads to Local Jobs

*Collaborative internship program gives students holistic work experience in real care settings*

“I have taken vital signs, helped feed a patient, changed bed linens, and met with hospital executives,” says Long Beach resident Cynthia Carrillo. What makes Cynthia’s experience unique is that she did all this as an undergraduate student. In her final semester studying Health Care Management at California State University Dominguez Hills, Cynthia participated in the COPE Health Scholars program. She was placed at Kaiser Permanente South Bay, where her rotations gave her a holistic understanding of one of the nation’s largest health plans.

An innovative collaboration between COPE Health Solutions, UCLA Executive Programs in Health Policy and Management, and health care organizations like Kaiser Permanente, the COPE Health Scholars program offers college students the opportunity to gain first-hand experience in non-licensed patient care. Most participants graduate in 15 months, after completing 280 hours, but there are also shorter or longer tracks available. Over the last 15 years, the program has built an alumni network of 34,000 students.

Gurpreet Kaur, program manager with COPE Health Solutions at Kaiser Permanente South Bay, says, “Our Scholars gain experience in clinical and administrative health care settings, becoming an integral part of the care delivery team. Not only do they learn necessary skills at the health system level, they also learn the culture of their host organization. This has translated into full-time jobs for many of our graduates, including 5 at Kaiser Permanente South Bay.”

Dr. Barbara Carnes, area medical director for Kaiser Permanente South Bay, praises the program’s impact on young students. “We’re thrilled to partner with the COPE Health Scholars program to help train the next generation of health care workers,” she says. “The students come away from this experience with a comprehensive understanding of the continuum of care. The hands-on environment develops them into well-rounded workers, who can draw from a deep well of first-hand experience in their future career.”

In March 2018, after participating in the program for 17 months, Cynthia was hired by Kaiser Permanente South Bay as a full-time service representative at their Gardena Medical Offices.

“As a service representative, you’re the first point of care, so your interaction with members sets the tone for their entire time here,” explains Cynthia. “Going into my current role, I had already learned from my mentors at Kaiser Permanente how to comfort patients, be part of a team, maintain a professional demeanor, and organize and manage my time. And being a Health Scholar was a great way to learn the organization’s culture, vision, and goals.”

Megumi Boyd, manager of administrative services and Cynthia’s supervisor, says, “Employing Cynthia was the best hiring decision I ever made, and I know the rest of our office staff believe that, as well. She’s a fantastic addition to our team. Our people are our greatest asset, so we want to continue training Health Scholars to be the kind of health care workers we would want to hire.”

In the future, Cynthia hopes to become a project manager for Kaiser Permanente while getting her Master’s in Public Health and, ultimately, become a department administrator. Whatever her career may bring, she sees a future with the organization that opened its doors to her as a student.

“I originally chose to be a Health Scholar at Kaiser Permanente because of their excellent reputation – you just hear so many good things about it, and now I have seen that it’s true,” she says. “I’m grateful to them and the COPE Health Scholars program for putting me on the path to success.”



**Former COPE Health Scholar Cynthia Carrillo now has a full-time job at Kaiser Permanente.**