

## INROADS Internship Program Creates Caretakers Of Tomorrow



Reyna Garcia was excited to enroll in the INROADS summer internship program at CSM in 2005. With a mission “to develop and place underserved youth in business and industry and prepare them for corporate and community leadership,” the program fit exactly with her plans.

“I was 18 years old when I received the offer from CSM for an INROADS internship position in the Biomedical Engineering Department,” Reyna recalls. The offer letter “made me realize I was someone who successful directors of organizations believed would be a significant addition in their corporation. Knowing someone else saw this potential in me only instilled the desire to continue improving myself so that I could in turn impact someone else’s life.”

The INROADS Program is a collaboration between CSM and the Milwaukee INROADS cooperative to provide culturally diverse college students an opportunity to experience the healthcare workplace. In turn, CSM benefits from the perspective and skills of an energetic and ambitious group of young people who may choose CSM as their future employer.

INROADS interns have taken on roles as patient care attendants, emergency care technicians, public relations and marketing interns, biomedical engineering technicians, business office special projects coordinators, speech language pathology interns, human resources assistants and diversity resources interns.

The four-year internship, during which Reyna supported machines critical to life, seemed to give her a straight path to her future. Her path took a bit of a turn, however, when she noticed that patient interaction was what she enjoyed most. She began to reassess her goals. Her path turned to medicine – and a plan to get experience in direct patient care while preparing for the medical school admitting exam.

During a year of study for the exam, Reyna applied for a dental assistant position at CSM’s Smart Smiles Program. Because the Community Services staff knew her from her INROADS success, she was quickly hired. A year later, she advanced to Oral Health Advocate – linking kids with cavities and other urgent needs to clinical care from dentists in the community and at CSM’s St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Dental Clinic.

“I loved the mission I fulfilled as Oral Health Advocate within Smart Smiles,” Reyna says. “Every oral screening that was completed in the schools exposed at least one or two dental emergencies in the children. I was happy I could find doctors to treat these urgent cases, but I still felt I could do more. At times, I felt powerless when I could not do more for the other children who while not in need of urgent care, would soon be. The desire to do more for them propelled me to go to dental school so that I could return and take care of them.”

Her path again veered, away from the medical school exam and toward the dental school exam. Good scores on the test took her to Marquette University for four years of dental school. From there, her path led her to her degree (doctor of dental surgery) and to several job offers in Southeastern Wisconsin, which she is considering.

Reyna returned to CSM recently to thank everyone who was with her along the path. She hopes her path will lead to three years of general dentistry, working with a community health center, then perhaps a specialty in pediatric dentistry after she has paid back some loans.

But who knows? A path can take many turns.