

**Biography of
Ms. Denisse Rojas Marquez
Medical Student, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Co-founder, Pre-Health Dreamers
New York, NY**

Denisse Rojas Marquez envisions a health care system where no individual is excluded. Growing up as an undocumented immigrant, she and her family had limited health care options and as a result, they would delay treatment for illnesses and use free or subsidized health care. Through these difficult experiences, Denisse was inspired to become a doctor in underserved communities that advocates for all patients and is a leader in shaping health care policies.

Denisse was less than a year old when she and her family left Mexico for the United States. As a resident of Fremont, California, her family found new opportunities that enabled Denisse and her two siblings to attend college. Her path, however, had many roadblocks. Due to her status, Denisse was ineligible for financial aid and was often discouraged that school counselors could not offer guidance on her educational goals. Moreover, Denisse was painfully separated from family members who, as a result of stalled policies on immigration, left for Canada.

Denisse remained steadfast in her aspirations and graduated from UC Berkeley with majors in Sociology and Integrative Biology in 2012. That same year, Denisse co-founded a national organization called Pre-Health Dreamers (PHD) to provide advising, resources and advocacy for other undocumented youth like herself. In just a few years, PHD has reached over 800 members in 42 states. Through Denisse's leadership, the organization co-sponsored legislation to allow California licensing boards to award professional licenses to individuals regardless of immigration status, given all other requirements are met, and engage in institutional advocacy in partnership with other academic groups. Most recently, she co-authored an article in *Academic Medicine* that provides guidance on considering DACA recipients for residency positions. As a result of PHD's advocacy, more medical schools will consider undocumented students for admission.

Denisse has also been a spokesperson for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that was created by then President Obama in 2012. Her story has been featured in *CNN Money*, *National Public Radio's Latino USA*, and *Forbes* magazine recognized Denisse in its '30 Under 30' most influential entrepreneurs in education. For her achievements as a New American and her potential to contribute to American society, Denisse also received the Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans for up to \$90,000 in support for graduate school.

Denisse is now a third year medical student at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai where she is working towards her MD. Denisse will devote herself to a life of service through direct care, research, and policy to ensure that quality health care is accessible to all underserved communities and higher education is attainable for underrepresented minority students.