

Eneida O. Roldan, MD, MPH, MBA

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Dr. Eneida O. Roldan was always very curious about how the body worked. When she was eight she dissected her first animal, a frog. In the seventh grade she won first place at the National Science Fair. From that point on she knew that medicine was going to be a part of her life.

So would a lifelong passion for learning and education.

A self proclaimed “pro-education” advocate, this would explain why Dr. Roldan has three degrees (MD, MPH, MBA) and has been heavily involved at multiple academic institutions throughout her more than 30 years of experience in the healthcare industry: Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, the Physician Executive MBA program (PEMBA) at the University of Tennessee, and the Florida International University Chapman School of Business. She cites her middle school and high school science teachers as her early motivators – the ones who pushed her to follow her dreams.

But it’s Dr. Roldan’s grandmother whom she calls her first mentor. An aspiring nurse, Dr. Roldan’s grandmother unfortunately didn’t get the chance to go to nursing school, but she was the one who instilled in young Dr. Roldan a passion for science.

Once Dr. Roldan started working toward her health career, she found mentors during her residency and particularly in Dr. Marie Valdés-Dapena, one of the country’s first pediatric pathologists who was a leader in the study of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

“She was an incredible mentor,” mused Dr. Roldan. “She was a mother of eight. She taught me I am able to reach my dreams and yet fill other roles in my life as a mother and wife.”

A mentorship program is something Dr. Roldan wants to foster heavily as a recently added member to the HSHPs board.

“I am fascinated by having this opportunity because we have so much more to do,” she said. “We are falling short in having a sustainable comprehensive mentorship program.”

In envisioning this kind of mentorship program, Dr. Roldan differentiates between a mentor and a sponsor. “A mentor is about building a value base and self-awareness and a sponsor helps you

build the road map for much more of an internal career path,” she explains. “A mentor is an individual you can sit with and give you the ‘tough love.’ A sponsor shows you the ropes [of a potential career]. Not all sponsors can be mentors. It is our duty to focus on both.”

It is a duty Dr. Roldan is ready to take on headfirst. “We need to break that glass ceiling. There are not too many Latinos in executive positions,” she said.

Breaking barriers isn’t new to Dr. Roldan; she became the first Hispanic to lead the American Board of Obesity Medicine nationally. It was a responsibility – a “double responsibility” - she took seriously as a Hispanic and as a woman. She is quick to advise minority health professions students to find power in their identity.

“Never think of your gender or your ethnicity as an obstacle but rather as an opportunity. You can never control people’s perceptions. The only thing you can control is yourself.”