The Hector P. Garcia Committee solicits applications from UTMB students for the Hector P. Garcia, M.D. Cultural Competence Award. The award, which includes a monetary prize, will be presented on Sept. 15, 2004, at the annual Hector P. Garcia, M.D. Award Ceremony.

The award celebrates Garcia, a distinguished School of Medicine Class of 1942 alumnus and civil rights champion, and recognizes a student who demonstrates commitment to providing quality health care to all by incorporating cultural knowledge and skills in his or her service to others.

All full-time UTMB students are eligible to enter. Applications, including a required essay, must be received by Aug. 27, 2004.

**Deadline**
Submit all materials no later than Aug. 27, 2004, to:

Office of Student Services
Jamail Student Center
Room 2.110

**Sponsors**
The Hector P. Garcia Cultural Competence Award is sponsored by the UTMB Diversity Council, Office of Student Services and Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

**Contact**
For more information about the award or diversity programs at UTMB, contact the Office of Student Services at (409) 747-4820 or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity at (409) 772-1463.

Information is also available on the web: http://www.utmb.edu/drgarcia
**Selection Criteria**

All applicants must:

- have good academic standing,
- have demonstrated commitment to personal and professional development of cultural competency skills,
- have demonstrated leadership and service in cross-cultural activities, and
- be enrolled as a full-time UTMB student

**Application**

Students must submit the following materials to be considered for the Hector P. Garcia, M.D. Cultural Competence Award:

- A cover letter declaring the student’s interest in being considered for the award and providing information on the student’s leadership and service in cross-cultural activities.
- An essay expressing the student’s understanding of cultural competence as it relates to his or her ability to work with, conduct research with or treat people from diverse cultures. Students may write about their own personal experiences and the ways in which their understanding, attitudes and skills relative to cross-cultural issues have evolved. Essays should be typed double-spaced with 1.5” margins and should not exceed 1,500 words.
- Email your essay in MS Word to Susan Duif with the Office of Student Services at suduif@utmb.edu.
- Applicants should not include their name on their essay, because submissions will be evaluated in a “blind review” process.
- A letter of reference from someone who can confirm the student’s development in the area of cultural competence and commitment to diversity.

**Selection Process**

Essays will be judged by members of the Hector P. Garcia Committee. The judges will evaluate the writer’s personal understanding of cultural competence and commitment to diversity.

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**Hector P. Garcia, M.D.**

Dr. Hector P. Garcia, School of Medicine Class of 1942, is known throughout Texas for a number of civil rights landmarks, especially those affecting Mexican-Americans.

After World War II, during which he earned the Bronze Star with six battle stars, Dr. Garcia returned to practice medicine in his hometown of Corpus Christi. As the directing physician in the Nueces County Hospital emergency room, he was dismayed to learn that a Mexican woman was not admitted because there was no room for her in the “Mexican Ward” and she was not allowed in the “White Ward.” It happened that this woman was a Gold Star Mother, meaning she had lost a son in the war. Dr. Garcia fought the injustice and eventually prevailed in ending the practice of maintaining separate wards based on ethnicity.

His trailblazing efforts on behalf of Mexican-American veterans brought him and his family threats and even harassment by members of the state legislature. The widow of one such Texas war veteran, Felix Longoria, went to Dr. Garcia when the cemetery in her South Texas hometown of Three Rivers would not allow her to use its chapel for her husband’s memorial service because he was Mexican. Dr. Garcia’s activism brought so much publicity that it captured the attention of then-Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas. Johnson intervened and arranged a hero’s burial for Longoria at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

To battle injustices for Mexican-American veterans, Dr. Garcia founded the G.I. Forum, which became one of the nation’s leading Hispanic civil rights organizations and proponents of education for Mexican-Americans. Together, the G.I. Forum and Dr. Garcia were the driving forces behind a 1959 Supreme Court ruling that deemed it unconstitutional to exclude Mexican-Americans from Texas grand juries.

Dr. Garcia served as ambassador to the United Nations and was appointed to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. In 1985, Yale University endowed a chair in his name, and in 1990 Pope John Paul II inducted Dr. Garcia into the Equestrian Order of Pope Gregory the Great, the highest honor a lay person may receive from the Catholic Church.

An advisor to six U.S. presidents, Dr. Garcia was recognized by President Ronald Reagan in 1984 for meritorious service to the United States and was awarded the Medal of Freedom. Dr. Garcia was the first Mexican-American to receive the medal, which is the nation’s highest civilian honor. President Clinton, who first met Dr. Garcia in 1972, praised him as an inspiration.

Dr. Hector, as he was called by his friends and patients, died July 1996 in Corpus Christi at the age of 82. When he was governor of Texas, President George W. Bush acknowledged Dr. Garcia as a “true Texas legend.” It seemed fitting that his name be associated with an award established by his alma mater to recognize the importance of cross-cultural understanding and to honor the example Dr. Garcia set in that regard.