

The University of Texas
Rio Grande Valley



**DR. MICHAEL GORENA AND
DR. MARIA LOZANO-GORENA**

“We think that giving back to the community that we live in is what brings us the most joy. There are so many ways that we can give back that can truly make our community a better place for us all.”

Funding the Education of Students from the RGV

The Michael A. Gorena & Maria Lozano-Gorena Endowed Scholarship

For Drs. Michael and Maria Gorena, altruism is deeply rooted. The pair of physicians, who have devoted their careers to helping others, made what they say was an easy decision to donate to their alma mater. "We think that giving back to the community that we live in is what brings us the most joy," said Dr. Michael Gorena. "There are so many ways that we can give back that can truly make our community a better place for us all."

Both Michael and Maria knew at a young age that they wanted to pursue a career in medicine. For Maria, it was to follow in her father's footsteps. "My dad is a family practice physician," said Dr. Maria Lozano-Gorena. He has always been very dedicated to his patients and is passionate about the care they receive. I grew up seeing him work hard but also saw his joy and peace when he'd run into his patients in the community."



Dr. Maria Lozano-Gorena and Dr. Michael Gorena with a colleague during a mission trip to Guatemala.



Dr. Michael Gorena pictured during his fellowship in pediatric anesthesiology at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, TX.

For Michael, he saw an example of skilled physicians when his mother was in a horrific car wreck while he was in middle school. "I felt the physicians during that time really took very good care of her and it inspired me moving forward," he said.

The married pair of physicians met at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) legacy institution The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA). They both attended Baylor College of Medicine for medical school and residency training. Dr. Michael Gorena completed a pediatric anesthesiology fellowship at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, TX. Dr. Maria Lozano-Gorena completed a fellowship in obstetric anesthesiology at Ben Taub Hospital in Houston, TX. Once their training was complete, the Gorenas were eager to return to the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) to practice medicine.

Giving Back to Their Community

"We really like that we have been able to come back and practice in the community that we were raised in," said Dr. Michael Gorena. "Being able to give back is what makes us most proud."

In early 2019, the Gorenas made a pledge to UTRGV to establish The Michael A. Gorena & Maria Lozano-Gorena Endowed Scholarship, which will fund the education of students in the UTRGV Honors College who are pursuing a pre-medicine degree. Precedence is given to those who are from the RGV and are first generation college students.

The Gorenas are excited to watch the evolution of the UTRGV School of Medicine, which accepted its charter class in 2015, and its impact on the local community. The school is bringing a higher caliber of education and medical care to the region that historically lacked access to many specialties. "In the past, when specialty care was needed, people were often forced to travel upstate [for treatment]," said Dr. Maria Lozano-Gorena. "This should become a thing of the past in the next decade as the medical school continues to grow." The medical school is also attracting more nurses, mid-level providers, and therapists to the region.



Dr. Michael Gorena and Dr. Maria Lozano-Gorena with their three children, Isabella, Jonathan, and Jacob.

Taking Their Profession to Heart

For students pursuing a medical degree, or those who are new in their career, Dr. Michael Gorena offers the following advice: "Do not lose your compassion. We are privileged to take care of people when they are at their worst. The person you are treating is somebody's parent, sibling, or friend. Take your profession to heart."



Dr. Maria Lozano-Gorena in the operating room at Rio Grande Regional Hospital in McAllen, TX.

As a mom of three young children, Dr. Maria Lozano-Gorena is especially passionate about providing children access to resources to help develop their learning and reading skills. "Because of our jobs, we meet people from different walks of life with varying levels of education," she said. "Reading is one of the most fundamental pieces to achieving a good education and studies have shown that kids who pick up good reading and comprehension skills early on perform better in academics in general and have more self-confidence. Having a good education opens doors and gives them more choices."

Reflecting on the positive examples they have had throughout their careers, Drs. Michael and Maria Gorena recall a mentor at Texas Children's Hospital who won a new car in a raffle. Instead of accepting the car, she worked a deal in which the proceeds from the car, once sold, would be donated to develop a scholarship for students in need. "That type of selflessness stuck with us," said Dr. Michael Gorena. "And now, even though we are very busy with our jobs and our kids, we thought that starting an endowment at UTRGV would be a great way to help future students just the way the scholarships we received helped us out."