

# Richard Vidal

▼ Florida State University ▼ 3.56 GPA  
▼ Senior in Pre-Medicine, Biology & Calculus

Some may think Richard Vidal has leadership in his DNA. Vidal won't argue with that. "I think there's an inborn drive within everybody in my family," he says. "I get passionate about work—I won't eat or sleep, because I get so excited." Vidal uses his innate quality to better people's lives as the founder of the International Medical Outreach Program, the first international service-learning experience for pre-med students at FSU.

Florida Leader magazine, SunTrust Education Loans, Publix Super Markets, and a statewide panel of judges are proud to recognize Richard Vidal, a senior in biology, calculus, and pre-medicine at Florida State University, as the 2000 Florida College Student of the Year.

For the outreach program, Vidal organizes missions in which medical students provide health care through temporary clinics in countries lacking advanced technology. In the past year, he expanded the program to include two more weeklong missions to Haiti for the 12 student members. Volunteers performed triage duties, ran lab tests, and assisted in minor surgeries.

"As students with training, we're allowed to do a lot we couldn't do in the US," he says. For the group's January trip to Haiti, Vidal collected more than 1,000 pounds of medications and supplies donated by pharmaceutical companies, physicians, and local businesses, and as a result, the missionaries treated more than 700 patients.

Vidal also is founding President of the American Medical Student Association, the first organization for pre-med students at FSU committed to service, the interests of the patients, and diversity. For AMSA, Vidal coordinates weekly meetings, speaker visits, and biweekly hands-on service projects such as providing health care for underserved communities.

As the Student Government Association's director of health, Vidal designs programs to create a more student-friendly environment at FSU's Thagard Health Center. Vidal's

position on the Student Advisory Committee, in which he reviews the health center's operations to improve student access, allows him to create projects such as "Health and Fitness Awareness Week." His dedication to medical service has led him to be named the Student Advocate for the American College Health Association. Vidal also is a board member of the Florida Office of Collegiate



Volunteerism, a member of Burning Spear—a group dedicated to upholding FSU traditions—and an Interfraternity Council Judicial Board justice who serves on the standards council for FSU's Greeks. "The vice president of IFC chooses respected individuals from Greek chapters to review backgrounds and cases of any fraternity that gets in trouble," he says. "We act like lawyers—it's a whole formal process."

Though he's preparing to apply to medical schools such as Johns Hopkins and Columbia while staying involved, Vidal says he doesn't feel overwhelmed. "My parents came from

Cuba alone at the age of 12. My dad worked hard, became successful, became a doctor, and provided so much for us—I want to be able to do the same one day," says Vidal, 22. "To put it simply, accomplishing my goals just makes me happy.

"One of my weaknesses is that I get really passionate about my work, and at times, it can have a derogatory effect on my relationships," he says. To use his time wisely, Vidal balances academics, finances, friendships, and philanthropies by grouping them all together. Currently, he partially funds his education through training to become a Certified Tissue Bank Specialist at his job at a tissue bank while fulfilling his enthusiasm to help others.

The Sigma Phi Epsilon "Brother of the Year," who led the Florida Epsilon chapter to win the Interfraternity Council Service Award, also merges his love for travel and camaraderie with service. This summer, Vidal

will serve as a medical assistant in Africa and in several cities in Europe. "I love to travel. You learn so much from it," he says. "I take so many things from people from different cultures such as their philosophy on life. We view wealth as happiness, and they view health as happiness.

"I want to continue to be a balanced individual in academics, service, leadership, and research, and stay happy," Vidal says. "There's so much I want to do and so many dreams I want to accomplish. It's a challenge to do so much without giving up something else." While he holds numerous leadership positions, Vidal knows that being a one-man-show isn't the best way to achieve his goals. "I love to lead and delegate and watch and learn from people," he says. "During meetings, I present 10 leadership commandments, and one of them is 'Delegate, delegate, delegate.'"

While Vidal, the first runner-up for FSU's 1999-2000 Homecoming Chief, says that his family members are born leaders, he still tries to develop his natural ability. "I take pieces from a lot of people, like something a person says to me over the phone or comments from a total stranger.

I've had a lot of people in my past influence the way my life is going," Vidal says. "I like very much to sit back and be a third-person observer, being able to watch people working and look at the big picture."

Vidal says his friends probably would describe him as a good listener who always has a smile on his face and is very rarely tense. "I don't do anything that stresses me out," Vidal says. "If that means squeezing something in to see the smile on people's faces, or not committing to something because I can't give it my all." ▀