

UCSD professor receives grant from Spencer Foundation to support after-school programs to increase computer literacy

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UCSD PROFESSOR RECEIVES GRANT FROM SPENCER FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS TO INCREASE COMPUTER LITERACY

Michael Cole, a professor of psychology and communications at the University of California, San Diego, has been awarded a grant from the Spencer Foundation to support research and the studies of UCSD doctoral students in developing computer literacy and other learning development programs for children.

According to the Spencer Foundation, a private institution based in Chicago, Illinois, Cole was one of only sixteen recipients chosen from a large pool of applicants nationwide, on the basis of his past research and ability as a scholar to guide and nurture aspiring researchers. The Spencer Mentor Network Grant provides recipients with a \$50,000 grant to be used over a two-year period to finance education-related research and doctoral students working with the recipient.

Some of Cole's recent work includes the development of an after-school educational program called the "Fifth Dimension," designed for elementary school children. The program has been a long-term project of UCSD's Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC). Cole has played a central role in initiating and developing the program, which began in San Diego and has now been established in other U.S. cities, as well as abroad.

The Fifth Dimension program is designed to develop computer literacy and general cognitive and social skills in children during after school hours. The program challenges children with innovative computer games and educational software, as well as other non-computer activities that include board games, arts and crafts, and physical exercise. While the Fifth Dimension's primary purpose is to develop models for community-based, after-school educational activity, it also provides a framework for more basic research into the processes of learning and development.

Professor Cole's research on the relationship between learning and development in children has included projects in the United States as well as in England and the former Soviet Union. One of Cole's international efforts was his 1990 project to improve East-West relations, that involved computerized communication between elementary school children in Russia and the United States.

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