

Three UCSD Undergraduates Receive Awards at the SACNAS National Conference in Kansas City

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The UCSD CAMP students who attended the SACNAS research conference (left to right): Robert Valtierra, Antoinette Corbin, Lisandro Maya Ramos, Marcus Rosario, Jorge Ortiz and Breena Fraga.

University of California, San Diego undergraduates Jorge Ortiz, Robert Valtierra, and Breena Fraga were recognized for research excellence recently at the national conference of the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS). The conference was held in Kansas City, MO.

All are participants in UCSD's California Alliance for Minority Participation in Science, Engineering and Mathematics (CAMP) program - a unit of the university's Academic Enrichment Programs (AEP) under Student Educational Advancement, Student Affairs.

In addition to the three awardees, the following UCSD CAMP students also presented research findings at the conference: Antoinette Corbin, Marcus Rosario and Lisandro Maya Ramos (all undergraduates), and graduate students Serena Moseman and Elisa Maldonado. As many as 1,000 students from universities across the nation attended the gathering featuring over 450 poster presentations and 67 oral presentations.

Participation in SACNAS and similar conferences complements the research training available through several AEP programs and exposes students to professional development experiences that motivate them to pursue graduate school. The SACNAS conference left a strong impression on UCSD students who attended.

Jorge Ortiz, an award winner in Engineering for his poster presentation titled *Floating Modular Hybrid Pier Long Term Test on Fender System* says: "At the conference, I was given the opportunity to network with scientists in all disciplines which allowed me to better understand what it would take for me to be successful in my graduate studies." Ortiz conducted his research under the guidance of professor Chia-Ming Uang of the UCSD Structural Engineering department.

Robert Valtierra, who also won an award in Engineering, and Breena Fraga, who took away an award in Chemistry, concur. "Not only was I given extensive information from different graduate schools, but from different companies as well, which increase my options to consider after I graduate," says Fraga. Her presentation, *Quantum Mechanical Investigations Into the Mechanism and Factors That Control the Stereoselectivity of Somo-Activated Organocatalysi*, reflects research performed at UCLA and supervised by professor Houk. Valtierra adds, "I came to the conference with doubts about my desire to continue my education after graduation, but left very inspired to pursue an advanced degree." His research presentation was titled *Development of Electronic Fuel Injection and Flex Fuel Retrofit System*.

All UCSD CAMP undergraduate students who attended presented their research in poster format, and five of them were awarded the SACNAS Travel Scholarship which covered hotel accommodations and airplane ticket.

SACNAS is "an excellent forum for undergraduate and graduate students to present their research findings in a supportive and intellectually stimulating environment," says Jacqueline Azize-Brewer, Ph.D., UCSD's CAMP coordinator. "It is truly an exceptional conference that emphasizes scientific excellence and the value of mentorship. I am thrilled with the way our university was represented at this conference by the students and their outstanding research presentations," she adds.

All UCSD undergraduate students participating in SACNAS this year not only have a history of being involved with CAMP, but also other key academic enrichment experiences offered through AEP, including: the Summer Research Program (SRP), Faculty Mentor Program (FMP), National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME), McNair Program, University of California Leadership Excellence through Advanced Degrees (UC LEADS), and the Health and Medical Professions Preparation Program (HMP3). In particular, Fraga has extensive research experience which she has acquired over the last two years as a UC LEADS scholar.

For more information on SACNAS and the CAMP program, contact Jacqueline Azize-Brewer, Ph.D., (858) 534-8839 or: jazize@ucsd.edu

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