

Henson-Phillips Assumes Pivotal Role As New Coordinator Of UCSD Faculty Mentor Program

March 20, 2006

Michael Dabney

Veronica Henson-Phillips, an academic advising specialist and professor of Speech Communication and Theater, has been appointed coordinator of the Faculty Mentor Program (FMP) at the University of California, San Diego. In her position, Henson-Phillips plays a significant role in furthering UCSD's mission of preparing more undergraduates in a wide range of academic disciplines for research opportunities with faculty members, and for graduate or professional school admission.

FMP is one of eight undergraduate research and graduate school-preparation initiatives administered by UCSD's Academic Enrichment Programs, a unit of Student Affairs' Student Educational Advancement (SEA) cluster.

Henson-Phillips' hiring comes at a pivotal time for FMP and AEP as both entities work to extend to undergraduates the unique opportunity to work closely with distinguished professors in the students' respective fields of interest.

FMP is open to any junior or senior in any field with a grade point average of 2.7 or higher who wants a significant research experience. It is especially attractive to students preparing for graduate or professional school. Participants work as research assistants to UCSD faculty members for two quarters, usually consecutive, for at least 10 hours per week. In exchange, the students receive four units of 199 independent study credit for each quarter. They also attend seminars, developed by Henson-Phillips, on how to write a research paper and present original research at conferences and scholarly meetings. Other seminar topics include applying to graduate school and finding fellowship support for advanced study. At the conclusion of the program, students present the results of their research at the Faculty Mentor Program Research Symposium.

Says Henson-Phillips: "Scholarly research, whether in the arts and humanities or biological sciences, is a wonderful opportunity for undergraduates to make a significant contribution in a field that they care about. Many times it is the research project that inspires students to pursue a graduate or professional degree. I'm excited about coordinating a program that brings out these possibilities."

On average, FMP serves 200 or more students each year. Currently more than 100 UCSD faculty serve as FMP mentors. Many recent FMP graduates are currently in master's or doctoral programs across the country, or in professional schools such as medicine, law, dentistry and veterinary medicine. Many others are serving in these professions.

In addition, FMP's is a centerpiece of AEP, receiving students from and referring them to the other programs, including: UCSD's California Alliance for Minority Participation in Science, Engineering and Mathematics Program (CAMP); McNair Program; the Health and Medical Professions Preparation Program (HMP3); University of California Leadership Excellence Through Advanced Degrees (UC LEADS); Computer Science, Engineering and Mathematics Scholarship (CSEMS) Program; UCSD Undergraduate Research Conference, and the Summer Research Program.

David Artis, Director of AEP, says, "Veronica is the first full-time FMP coordinator since Darlene Salmon, who helped create the program and ran it for nearly 15 years. We needed to find someone who understood why the original model was so successful but who isn't afraid to take FMP in some new directions." He adds, "Veronica is already providing a high level of service to both our students and faculty mentors. She's also begun some new outreach efforts to first- and second-year students and departments. She's creative and energetic and really believes these students don't have to be in graduate school to make real contributions to research."

Henson-Phillips is particularly enthused about the new Undergraduate Research Center website (<http://ugresearch.ucsd.edu>) that AEP launched last year which allows UCSD faculty to go online to find qualified undergraduate research assistants, and to post available undergraduate research assistant opportunities of their own.

"We've had a great initial response to the site," says Artis. "Students especially like being able to store papers, personal statements, and other materials there securely. They also like the search function and the immediate ability to contact faculty about research opportunities. Faculty members appreciate being able to advertise to a large number of students so easily." Currently, more than 640 students have created accounts on the site.

Henson-Phillips looks forward to implementing several new workshops which she says will personalize FMP's research skill enhancement for students even more. Workshops will cover such topics as : *How to Plan and Deliver an Effective Research Presentation; How to Create Powerful Power Point Presentations; Voice and Diction, and How to Speak with Distinction*. Another program will be tailored to preparing freshman and sophomores to enter FMP in their junior year.

Henson-Phillips graduated from UCSD's, Muir College in 1979 and received her Masters of Fine Arts from UCSD in 1987. She later taught part-time in UCSD's Theater Department in the early 1990's.

She recently moved back to San Diego after spending the last 12 years in the Atlanta area where she was a faculty member at Clark Atlanta University, Georgia State University and visiting assistant professor of Theater and coordinator of the Speaking Center at Agnes Scott College. In addition, she served as interim assistant director of Academic Advising during summer sessions at Agnes Scott College. A specialist in voice and speech, she has lectured and presented workshops at Brown University and the University of Louisville.

Henson-Phillips lives in San Diego's Tierrasanta area with her husband and daughter.

For more information on the Faculty Mentor Program, contact Henson-Phillips at vhensonphillips@ucsd.edu, or (858) 534-5791, or visit the Academic Enrichment Programs website: <http://aep.ucsd.edu/default2.htm>

Media Contact: Michael Dabney, (858) 822-0566.

