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Michael Dabney

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Paul Albert Lacson, an education consultant in the Oakland, CA Unified School District, has been named coordinator of the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program at the University of California, San Diego.

Lacson will manage the federally funded McNair Program which provides low-income and/or ethnically underrepresented undergraduates in all academic disciplines with effective preparation for doctoral study. Administered through UCSD's Academic Enrichment Programs, (a unit of Student Affairs), McNair offers students one year of research outside the classroom with a faculty mentor and participation in other scholarly activities, including the opportunity to present their work at established research conferences.

"Albert's experience in implementing federally funded professional development programs for educators in the Oakland Unified School District, in addition to his background in teaching and administering academic outreach initiatives for low-income students will help greatly in furthering the mission of the McNair Program," says David Artis, Ph.D., director of Academic Enrichment Programs at UCSD.

Lacson, who is scheduled to receive his Ph.D. in history next June from UC Davis, earned his bachelor of arts degree in history and women's studies from UC Irvine. He has served as a teaching assistant in history at UC Davis and as an instructor at Vallejo (CA) High School. He has a particular interest in studying the influence of Mexican and Indian cultures on the early settlement of California, and in 2004 he received the Milton Fintzelberg Award from the San Diego Historical Society for *Best Paper in Native, Spanish and Mexican Eras*.

Says Lacson: "As the new McNair coordinator, I am especially interested in building upon the success of the program, including eliciting input from McNair alumni and faculty on how the program can even be further enhanced for students."

The success of the program at UCSD in preparing undergraduates for the rigors of graduate school study is indeed noteworthy. In 1989 UCSD became one of 14 higher education institutions across the country to receive funding from the U.S. Department of Education to establish a McNair Program. The program continues to serve low-income students who are the first in their families to attend college, and/or who are underrepresented students (African American, Latino, Chicano and American Indian/Alaskan Natives). Thirty new McNair Scholars are named at UCSD each year.

To date, of the more than 400 such undergraduates who have completed McNair, at least 30 have gone on to earn Ph.D.'s; 73 have earned Master's degrees; five have received law degrees; nine have earned medical degrees; and 25 have reached at least the fourth year of their respective doctoral programs.

The program is open to juniors and seniors of all majors who are interested in obtaining a Ph.D. Students must have a GPA of at least 3.0. In addition to one-on-one work with a professor, McNair undergraduates also gain important skills through presenting their work at national research conferences, and through social events with UCSD faculty and monthly seminars on graduate school preparation.

McNair Scholars earn eight units of academic credit during winter and spring quarters, and participate full-time during the summer when they continue their research, earning four additional units of credit. The program pays students a \$2,800 stipend and also assists with preparation for the Graduate Record Exam (GRE).

For more information on the McNair Program, contact Paul Albert Lacson at (858) 534-2937.

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