

# SACNAS NEWS

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SOCIETY FOR ADVANCEMENT OF CHICANOS AND NATIVE AMERICANS IN SCIENCE



Ivan Koshinsky Photography

SACNAS students enjoying the welcome reception at the 2003 SACNAS National Conference.

## SACNAS 30th Anniversary Celebration!

*This issue of the SACNAS News celebrates the legacy of the Society's founding members and features articles written by founders and long-time members. The lead articles, written by scientists new to SACNAS, share highlights of the 2003 National Conference.*

*Dr. Richard Tapia reflects on the history of mentoring within the organization, and Drs. Diana Martinez and Bernard Ortiz de Montellano tell the story of the K-12 education program. We hear from veteran members Dr. Kristine Brenneman and graduate student Noe Galvan about how SACNAS has influenced their careers, and founder Dr. J.V. Martinez is profiled in the SACNAS Biography Project. The contributors explain the many facets of SACNAS, honor the past, and diligently persevere into the next 30 years.*



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**"All of you people will lead a better life and succeed. You will benefit people here, all over the United States, and all over the world."**

**Mr. Jose D. Chavez, during the Native American Blessing at the 2003 SACNAS National Conference**

# SACNAS Mentoring: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

by Richard Tapia, Ph.D.

*Dedicated to the memories of two recent losses to the SACNAS family, Joaquin Bustoz and Martha Contreras*

In the early 1970s, SACNAS gave members an opportunity for professional interaction among individuals that were just like us. We gave technical talks, provided forums for networking, and strived to build SACNAS into a national organization. All of this was accomplished in a supportive, comfortable atmosphere, one greatly in contrast to the daily environment in which we lived our professional lives. We were a small group who desperately needed each other for support. We had a purpose and, yes, we wanted to fix the world; but we also realized that our own survival was at stake. How could we help others if we ourselves did not survive?

Founding members of SACNAS saw that the most efficient way to effect change was from within the academic system, not outside. Yet out of the nearly fifty early members of SACNAS, only two of us had tenure—and without tenure, there is no power. We were also aware that the affirmative action policies were falling severely short. The affirmative action guidelines only specified requirements for hiring certain numbers of underrepresented minorities. However, there were no policies being enacted about retaining them. Thus, many universities, some that have very good reputations today, were meeting their hiring requirements but then firing the minority faculty almost immediately. Some of our brothers and sisters were lost along the way and as a group, SACNAS had to learn to deal with these obstacles.

Without formally recognizing it, mentoring became the backbone of SACNAS. For example, the senior faculty within the organization began to mentor the junior faculty about how to obtain tenure and work for change within their departments. The beautiful thing that SACNAS had—

and continues to have—is a common theme, individuals with somewhat different opinions, working together for the purpose of promoting the group. We looked at the big picture. In those days, we hoped to move forward, to survive, and to someday have SACNAS meetings with



*Richard A. Tapia, Ph.D.*

hundreds of students, students we could guide, and serve as role models for. This would be our way of furthering the cause of improving representation, of leveraging our commitment. We never dreamed that it would become the reality it has. First we brought in our own graduate students. Then those graduate students went forward and became leaders themselves.

After 30 years, it is more vital than ever that the work of SACNAS continue. On a national level, the representation of underrepresented minorities in higher level education and positions of leadership is not improving. However, SACNAS has seen that mentoring often works when everything else seems to fail. Over the years, SACNAS has developed programs to mentor students and teachers throughout the entire educational pipe-line: K-12 programs to graduate school.

Some think that mentoring is much like formal counseling, meeting once a week for an hour, but mentoring encompasses much more than that. The mentor-

ing process is actually something that occurs on a daily basis, at times when you never expect it.

An effective mentor will tell you there are two sides to being a role model. First, mentors serve as examples, proof that it can be done. We're raised in this country being told that we don't belong in various activities, and aren't good at them and shouldn't pursue them. All around us, people are telling us, "You can't. You shouldn't. It's not the right path." This is the

"excess baggage" we as Chicanos,

Latinos and Native Americans carry with us when we grow up in this country. It is extremely important, therefore, for someone to say "You do belong. You can do it." We must show you, the underrepresented minority student, that you're not alone. Even though you

may feel isolated, many others have felt like you, and have successfully traveled the same path you are traveling today. Secondly, we must show the majority world that we can excel at the highest levels, and by global standards. It's extremely important to believe and demonstrate that excellence comes in many flavors.

Today's mentoring challenge is: we must not lose you, the precious few who have made it to where you are today. You're committed and you're on a path to success. We need you as leaders, to help us reach those others who are underrepresented. But our job now is to make sure that you make it through and achieve the professional objectives that you desire. You have something to bring to the table that is very valuable and will make the university a better place. But you won't be hired for it and you won't be evaluated for

**"Founding members of SACNAS saw that the most efficient way to effect change was from within the academic system, not outside."**

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## Pre-Doctoral Degrees earned by SACNAS students in 2002-2003

**B.A./B.S.**—Maritza Alvarado, Psychology and Neuroscience, University of California, Berkeley ■ Neriuska Baez, Chemical Engineering, University of Puerto Rico ■ Jacqueline Besinaiz, Chemistry, Texas A&M University, Kingsville ■ Henry Delu, Jr., Molecular and Cell Biology, University of California, Berkeley ■ Katie Douglas, Chemical Engineering, University of Michigan ■ Lisa L. Falcon, B.A., Biology, minor in Chemistry, St. Mary's University, San Antonio ■ Adrian Gomez, Biology, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona ■ Maricela González, Biology, University of California, Santa Cruz ■ Angelica Gutierrez, Biology, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi ■ Racheal Howard, Oceanography, San Francisco State University ■ Adrian Jacobs, Biological Sciences, North Carolina State University ■ Chanda Jones, Marine Biology, Texas A&M University, Corpus Christi ■ Gabriel Robert Linares, Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior, University of California, Davis ■ Crystal Loudhawk, Sociology, University of Colorado, Denver ■ Greg Marquez, Biology and Chemistry, University of New Mexico ■ Rachel Mayfield-Chavez, Cellular/Molecular Biology, Humboldt State University ■ Malika Moutawakkil, Chemistry, University of California, Santa Cruz ■ Christina Medina, Biology, St. Francis College, Brooklyn ■ Bryan Montez-Sommese, Biology, University of California, Irvine ■ Jerome C. Nwachukwu, Biochemistry, California State University, Dominguez Hills ■ Rebecca Parker,

Mathematics, University of Georgia ■ Johanna M. Rodriguez, Chemistry, Florida International University, Miami ■ Yolanda Sanchez, Ecology and Organismal Biology, Arizona State University ■ Mildred Santana Velez, Industrial Microbiology, University of Puerto Rico ■ Kathryn Stalcup, Biology, Texas A&M University, Kingsville ■ Audrea Troutman, Biology, Xavier University of Louisiana

**M.S.**—Lina Albitar, Biomedical Sciences and Pharmacy, University of New Mexico ■ Irene Avila, Psychology (Behavioral Neuroscience), Arizona State University ■ Oscar Campos, Mathematics, Dartmouth College ■ Maytee Cruz-Aponte, Pure Mathematics, University of Iowa ■ Cesar De la Rosa, Mathematics, New Mexico State University ■ Claudia Flores, Geophysics, University of Texas at El Paso ■ Rotunda Floyd, Mathematics, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University ■ Marisa Garcia, Biomedical Engineering, University of California, Irvine ■ Leticia Gonzalez, Biology, University of Texas, San Antonio ■ Raul Gutierrez, Biology, University of Texas at El Paso ■ Marti Morales, Biology, New Mexico State University ■ Carlos Nieva, Electrical Engineering, New Mexico State University ■ Carl Pierce, Geophysics, Texas A&M University ■ Ulises M. Ricoy, Psychology, Universidad Ibero Americana, Mexico City ■ Laura Ruíz, Forest Science, Yale University ■ Delphine Tsinajinnie, Biology, University of Arizona

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it. Washington, D.C. does not understand the Southwest or the Mexican-American or the Native American. We must, therefore, strive to have representation in all parts of national leadership.

Through mentorship, SACNAS helped begin the work of diversifying faculty and bringing Chicano/Latinos and Native Americans into leadership roles at national scientific agencies. Our work is split up into three phases. During the first phase, we mentored and supported each other to survive in order to reach a point of critical mass. Phase two began as we started to succeed. The size of the group

increased, and we became the support mechanism for you, the students of today. Phase three starts with you. Carry with you the SACNAS cause. Put the total picture before the individual. We've done it so well in the past, and I know you will also. Tomorrow is not far away. You, the mentees of today, must be the mentors of tomorrow.

*Dr. Richard Tapia, a SACNAS founder, is the Noah Harding Professor of Computational and Applied Mathematics; associate director of Graduate Studies, Office of Research and Graduate Studies; and director of the Center for Excellence and Equity in Education at Rice University in Houston, Texas.*

Community News ...continued from page 13

■ Ms. Amaru Sanchez, a student at Barry University in Miami Shores, Florida, completed a summer research program at Cornell University.

■ Ms. Jennifer Sweeton, an undergraduate student at the University of Kansas, was selected to receive one of the new U.S. Department of Homeland Security scholarships (in total worth nearly \$20,000 per year for up to 2 years).

■ Mr. Nel Cevallos Venzon, Jr. and undergraduate in biology at the University of Hawaii, Manoa participated in a summer research program at Dartmouth Medical School Department of Microbiology and Immunology, where he worked with Dr. George A. O'Toole on characterization of the role of swarming motility in *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Biofilm Development.

■ Ms. Orlantha Whitehair, a recent graduate of University of Arizona, entered the M.D. program at the University of Arizona this fall.

■ Dr. Maria Elena Zavala, past president of SACNAS received an award from the the KCET Sixth Annual Local Hero of the Year Awards, in commemoration of Hispanic Heritage Month 2003.

## SACNAS News:

In an announcement celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and administrator for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) wrote, "Through NOAA's relationship with the League of United Latin American Citizens and the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science, and our participation at the National Hispanic Sustainable Energy and Environment Conference and the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Conference, NOAA shares a productive working relationship with many Hispanic Americans."