Growth of Geosciences Within the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS)

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For over 30 years, SACNAS has provided strong national leadership in improving and expanding opportunities for minorities in the scientific workforce and academia; mentoring college students within science, mathematics and engineering; as well as, supporting quality pre-college science education. SACNAS’ annual National Conference and K-12 Teacher Workshops, student chapters, e-Mentoring Program, and online internship/job placement resources are tools that help a diverse community of undergraduate and graduate students, professors, administrators, and K-12 educators achieve expertise within their disciplines.

Until recently, biological and biomedical sciences have dominated the science content of the SACNAS Annual Conference. However, in 2004, SACNAS established a Geoscience Task Force to help manage an NSF Opportunities for Enhancing Diversity in the Geosciences (OEDG) award. The Task Force also helps plan activities and develop strategies to increase the participation by geoscientists and students of geoscience in SACNAS activities. UNAVCO has played a key role in growing geoscience at the annual conference. For example, in 2005, UNAVCO worked with the Task Force to develop a day-long field trip to accompany the annual meeting in Denver, Colorado. UNAVCO sponsored the day’s travel to several regional sites including the UNAVCO, NCAR, USGS National Earthquake Information Center in Golden, and the USGS Ice Core Facility in Denver. The success and student interest of this event prompted a second field trip prior to the 2006 Tampa, Florida meeting, and interest continues to grow. UNAVCO sponsorship has solidified geoscience at the SACNAS annual conference and we hope to continue this popular annual event.

Finally, UNAVCO’s role in EarthScope Education and Outreach has helped facilitate other partnerships with SACNAS including professional development for SACNAS teachers at the recent annual SACNAS conference and 2007 EarthScope National Meeting.

Figure 1. SACNAS member, Ricardo Flores from Antelope High School in the Los Angeles area, attended the EarthScope Science Workshop in March, 2007. Teachers from around the country participated in a four-hour workshop given at the EarthScope National Meeting. Teachers learned about EarthScope, explored the Earth Structure through a hands-on activity, discussed fault creep by using the earthquake machine and investigated episodic tremor and slip in the Pacific Northwest in a hands-on activity using GPS data from the Plate Boundary Observatory.

Figure 2. Undergraduate students visited UNAVCO on a SACNAS-sponsored field trip.