SDSU Alumni Return to Mentor Current Students

SDSU's NIH-funded Initiative for Maximizing Student Development (IMSD) and Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) Programs are two of the many programs that comprise the Center for the Advancement of Students in Academia (CASA) and provide support to students across multiple departments within SDSU's College of Sciences, College of Engineering and College of Health and Human Services. IMSD and MARC, along with many other CASA programs, share a centralized mission to serve and prioritize students of marginalized and vulnerable communities

SDSU CoE alumna Lorelay Mendoza, (pictured in the bottom left), meets with IMSD/MARC Program Staff and fellow SDSU and MARC Program alumna, Sara Torres Robles, after co-facilitating an NSF GRFP Workshop.

studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), in addition to behavioral health disciplines, as they pursue admission into Ph.D. programs. As social justice oriented programs, alumni of IMSD and MARC continue the tradition of giving back to their communities by regularly returning to SDSU to mentor undergraduate students and help pave the path of equity and opportunity for the next generation.

IMSD & MARC jointly host a series of professional development and networking opportunities throughout the academic year, many of which leverage the knowledge and experiences of SDSU alumni across a variety of disciplines. During the Fall 2020 semester, four SDSU College of Engineering alumni volunteered to assist with three of these events. MARC alumna Lorelay Mendoza graduated from SDSU in 2019 with a B.S. in Environmental Engineering and is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Civil and Environmental Engineering at Stanford University. Lorelay was also selected for the prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowships Program (GRFP) as an undergraduate student in 2019. As a result, this year she co-facilitated a workshop on the NSF GRFP on September 04, 2020, which was attended by 25 junior and senior level undergraduate students interested in submitting NSF GRFP applications of their own. This 90-minute workshop included information on the benefits NSF GRFP awardees receive, eligibility criteria and strategies for completing the application, as well as reviewer feedback on successful application submissions. Students who participated in the workshop reported increased familiarity with the role of fellowships in graduate education, how to draft different components of the NSF GRFP application, and a general timeline for tackling the application process in its entirety.

On October 16, 2020, IMSD & MARC hosted their 22nd Annual Undergraduate Research Symposium (URS), where 20 current IMSD/MARC scholars were provided with a platform to practice and develop their presentation skills before presenting their research to larger audiences at local and national conferences. A total of 17 IMSD/MARC alumni, SDSU faculty and IRACDA postdoctoral fellows volunteered to serve as facilitators and judges for 5 different discipline specific presentation sessions, which allowed the scholars to receive feedback and

respond to questions about their research from peers and professionals in their field. Among these volunteers were two SDSU College of Engineering alumni, Anita Sanchez and Adrian Rivera. Anita is an alumna of the LSAMP, MESA and MARC programs who graduated from SDSU with a B.S. in Environmental Engineering in 2019 and is currently enrolled in a Ph.D. program in Civil and Environmental Engineering at Cornell University. Anita volunteered to serve as a facilitator at this year's URS and although a family health emergency ultimately prevented her from participating, her eagerness to give back to the SDSU community is recognized and appreciated. Adrian Rivera is an alumnus of the IMSD Program who graduated from SDSU in 2018 with a B.S. in Engineering and is currently pursuing a PhD in Engineering through the UCSD/SDSU Joint Doctoral Program. Adrian served as a judge for the Engineering and Physical Sciences presentation session during this year's URS. Thanks to the contributions of all of the volunteers at this event, the majority of students reported feeling a lot more prepared for future presentations.

SDSU CoE alumnus Daniel Delgado (pictured bottom center), introduces himself to a group of 65 participants at the start of the 2020 Current PHD Panel hosted by the IMSD & MARC Programs.

As the final event of the Fall semester, IMSD & MARC hosted their 13th Annual Current Ph.D. Panel on December 04, 2020 where 10 SDSU alumni currently enrolled in Ph.D. programs around the country were invited back to address some commonly held questions about graduate school. During the initial main panel, panelists responded to non-discipline specific questions submitted by students ranging from topics of how to prepare for and apply to graduate school, to funding opportunities and factors to consider when selecting a school, program and faculty mentor, as well as tips for coping with stress and other challenges. Following the main panel, participants broke up into 5 discipline specific breakout sessions, where students had the opportunity to engage with panelists about their experiences in a small group setting. The engineering breakout session was facilitated by MARC alumnus Daniel Delgado who graduated from SDSU in 2018 with a B.S. in Environmental Engineering and is currently enrolled as a PhD student in Environmental Engineering at the University of South Florida.

The IMSD and MARC programs, in conjunction with the CASA office, will continue offering workshops and networking opportunities for SDSU undergraduate students throughout the academic year. Anyone interested in obtaining more information regarding events planned for the Spring 2021 semester can contact the IMSD (maltemus@sdsu.edu) or MARC (thelma.chavez@sdsu.edu) Program Staff. Undergraduate students who are passionate about research and dedicated to earning a Ph.D. can visit the IMSD (http://sci.sdsu.edu/imsd/) and MARC (https://marc.sdsu.edu/) websites to learn more about these programs, including instructions for applying.