

Diversity Day at Ten Years

New Orleans, July 13 2005 SIAM Annual Meeting

Carlos Castillo-Chavez, chair of the organizing committee for Diversity Day 2005, worked with committee members Ricardo Cortez of Tulane University, Richard Tapia, and Margaret Wright to mark the 10th anniversary of the annual event. Castillo-Chavez, the Joaquin Bustoz Jr. Professor of Mathematical Biology at Arizona State University, was personally acquainted with many of the Diversity Day participants through MTBI (the Mathematical and Theoretical Biology Institute), the summer workshop for undergraduate and graduate students that he has run since 1996.



*Ten years ago, with the idea of making "everyone feel that they belong at a SIAM meeting," then SIAM president Margaret Wright worked with Richard Tapia to create the program for the first Diversity Day. Reporting in *SIAM News* on the first event, held in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1995, Cristina Villalobos, then a graduate student at Rice, described "a spectacular and exciting workshop, with back-to-back activities from 10:30 A.M. to 10:00 P.M." The format and spirit of Diversity Day, now a regular feature of the SIAM Annual Meeting, have remained pretty much intact. In New Orleans, Tapia and Wright led a spirited after-lunch discussion that touched on progress made—including the development of an effective network for min-ority students—as well as on ongoing challenges—especially the low numbers of underrepresented minorities on the faculties of top institutions.*



Devroy McFarlane and Sandra Farrier, both of Howard University. Farrier, one of the graduate student speakers at Diversity Day, gave a talk titled "Cesàro-like Means on p -adic Hilbert Spaces."



As a Los Alamos postdoc, Gerardo Chowell-Puente (left) works on the spread of disease—SARS, influenza, and HIV, among others. At Diversity Day, he gave a talk titled “Identification of Case Clusters and Counties of Greater Infective Connectivity in the 2001 Uruguayan Foot-and-Mouth Disease Epidemic.” He’s shown here with David Murillo, a graduate student at Arizona State University (center) and Jon Cline of Case Western Reserve University, also one of the nine speakers (“A Regional-scale Model for the Management of Multiple Stressors in the Lake Erie Ecosystem”).



Juan Meza of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory joined other long-time Diversity Day supporters in looking to the future, considering ways to make the workshop even more successful as it moves into its second decade. Some suggestions concerned speakers at the SIAM Annual Meeting: Perhaps SIAM, with a pretty good record of inviting women to give major addresses, could turn its attention to underrepresented minorities. Or to make minority students—and students in general—feel more a part of the Annual Meeting, SIAM might consider inviting a student to give a plenary address. In the end, pleased but not complacent, participants looked forward to the next Diversity Day. It will be held in Boston, during the 2006 SIAM Annual Meeting, whose organizing committee chairs are Carlos Castillo-Chavez and Ricardo Cortez.