

## **Math Professor Honored for Minority Mentoring**

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Ricardo Cortez, professor of mathematics and director of the Center for Computational Science at Tulane, received the 2010 Distinguished Undergraduate Institution Mentor Award by the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science. The honor recognizes professionals for their mentoring of underrepresented minority students.



"Students work with me or other faculty members locally, but I want to introduce them to a larger network of scientists," says math professor Ricardo Cortez, who won a national award for mentoring underrepresented minority students. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

"I've been involved in a lot of programs for mentoring and advancing minorities, especially in mathematics," says Cortez. "I started out helping in these programs when I was a graduate assistant at the University of CaliforniaâBerkeley," says Cortez. "The programs included courses, but it wasn't really about the courses, it was about putting the students in groups and having them complete a research project."

[Cortez](#) taught at another summer program in Puerto Rico in 2002, and the next summer he set up a similar program at Tulane, designed to encourage minority students to consider graduate school as a path to a career in math or science.

“Basically I haven't stopped since 2003,” says Cortez, who is the Pendergraft William Larkin Duren Professor.

In 2007 Cortez created a summer program for minority undergraduates at the [Mathematical Sciences Research Institute](#). Cortez is a director of this national program, which seeks to increase the number of underrepresented minorities in mathematics graduate programs and trains an average of 15 students per year, provides long-term mentoring and advises them on research careers.

This summer, the [Tulane Center for Computational Science](#) participated in a program involving education and outreach funded by the National Science Foundation through the Louisiana Board of Regents. At Tulane, the six-week summer program involved 25 students doing research in many areas including mathematics, biology, biomedical engineering, chemistry, ecology, physics and psychology.

These programs, which introduce students to key skills they will need to succeed in graduate school, also offer them the opportunity to present their research at national conferences.