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Media Release

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For Immediate Release

SAMSI to host this year's Blackwell-Tapia Conference

Blackwell-Tapia prize awarded to Dr. Juan C. Meza

October 31, 2008: Research Triangle Park, NC – The Statistical and Applied Mathematical Sciences Institute, a non-profit organization that focuses on statistical and applied mathematical research, is hosting the bi-annual Blackwell-Tapia Conference November 14 – 15 at the Radisson Inn – RTP in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

David Blackwell and Richard Tapia are two influential figures who inspired a generation of African-American, Native American and Latino/Latina students to pursue careers in mathematics.

This conference recognizes and showcases mathematical excellence by minority researchers. The day and a half conference will focus on successful efforts to address under-representation, career opportunities in mathematics, and allow attendees to network with mathematical researchers from around the U.S.

The highlight of the conference is the 2008 Blackwell-Tapia Prize. The award is in honor of the legacy of David Blackwell and Richard Tapia. This award recognizes a mathematical scientist who has contributed and continues to contribute significantly to research in his or her field of expertise, and who has served as a role model for mathematical scientists and students from under-represented minority groups or contributed in other significant ways to addressing the problem of the under-representation of minorities in mathematics.

This year's recipient is Dr. Juan C. Meza, department head and senior scientist for the High Performance Computing Research Department at Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory.

Dr. Meza has an exceptionally distinguished record as a mathematical scientist, an accomplished and effective head of a large department doing cutting-edge explorations in the computational sciences, computational mathematics, and future technologies, and a role model and active advocate for others from groups under-represented in the mathematical sciences. As a mathematician, his current research focuses on nonlinear optimization with an emphasis on methods for parallel computing, and he has also worked on various scientific and engineering applications including scalable methods for nanoscience, power grid reliability, molecular conformation problems, optimal design of chemical vapor deposition furnaces, and semiconductor device modeling. He is a much sought after speaker, both nationally and internationally, on topics ranging from his own research, through major invited talks on the importance of diversity such as his presentation as the 2008 Marjorie Lee Browne Colloquium Speaker for the University of Michigan's Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration, and advice important to young mathematicians-in-the-making such as his presentations to student groups on

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how they can be effective speakers and presenters themselves. His record of service to communities under-represented in mathematics includes chairing the Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI) Human Resources Advisory Committee, co-chairing the annual Diversity Day workshops of the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics, and many other activities too numerous to mention here; however, they regularly extend from serving on high-level advisory committees on diversity for major scientific organizations, through rolling up his own sleeves and working directly with early-career mathematics students from under-represented groups, as he did in the 2007 MSRI Undergraduate Program (MSRI-UP).

About SAMSI

The Statistical and Applied Mathematical Sciences Institute (SAMSI) is a national institute that is forging a new synthesis of the statistical and applied mathematical sciences with disciplinary science to confront important data- and model-driven scientific challenges.

SAMSI is a partnership of the National Science Foundation with the consortium of Duke University, North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the National Institute of Statistical Sciences.

For more information about SAMSI or about the 2008 Blackwell-Tapia Conference, go to: www.samsi.info.

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