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NPS, Hartnell Intern Partnership Takes Center Stage at Annual Symposium

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Article By: MC2 Shawn J. Stewart

As the largest partner in Hartnell College's summer internship program, the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) enjoyed an undeniable presence during Hartnell's latest Internship Symposium, Aug. 22. More importantly, the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) Symposium showcased the impact of what can happen when NPS and other entities partner with the local college community.

After accepting an award on behalf of NPS for outstanding work with STEM interns, President of NPS, retired Vice Adm. Ronald A. Route, addressed the Hartnell students, faculty, staff and family members in attendance with words of encouragement.

"I offer a hearty congratulations to the students of Hartnell. I've just walked around the research posters and I am truly impressed with the work you have done this summer," said Route. "You follow in the footsteps of Hartnell students who have been interns around the county for the last eight years. They have continued their education, have earned bachelors' degrees and some have earned masters' degrees. Many are working as engineers and scientists. This can be your path too."

Many in attendance concurred with Route's message, including one of the original founders of the internship program.

"NPS adds a great deal of value to this program," said former Hartnell Science and Math Institute Director Andy Newton, one of the symposium's key speakers, honorees and founder of the program. "The students are representative of low-income neighborhoods and are now given an opportunity to work in a professional research environment with future military leaders and world-class professors and researchers.

"They learn the value of being punctual, firm handshakes and eye contact, working as a team and all the professional skills they will need going forward," Newton continued. "NPS' impact is absolutely transformational to the students here; in a statement, they change the lives of these kids."

NPS' STEM interns are made up of a combination of high school, community college and university students selected through several intern partnerships and programs. The joint operation is a partnership between Hartnell College, NPS, California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB), and the Monterey Bay Regional Academy of Computing Education. In addition, NPS is an active participant in the Science and Engineering Apprenticeship Program (SEAP) and the Naval Research Enterprise Internship Program (NREIP).

Hartnell electrical engineering student, and NPS intern, Frank Osorio worked with NPS Department of Systems Engineering Senior Lecturer Gary Langford on "Structure Through Agricultural Innovation" this summer.

"My project allowed me to see a different side of engineering. With the help of Dr. Langford I was able to see how analytics, math and science play out," said Osorio. "We analyzed existing business principals to build a new business structure for agricultural business models. Dr. Langford allowed me to make mistakes and learn from them which was frustrating but also rewarding once I overcame them."

As a Los Angeles native, Osorio didn't see many opportunities for him to grow, so one year he and his family decided to move to Salinas seeking more educational opportunities.

"This opportunity is amazing!" said Osorio. "I can't describe it in words how much I appreciate the chance I've been given to work at NPS."

Osorio explained his family's progression from farm hands to farm owners and his plans for the future.

"I want to go beyond that," said Osorio. "I want to finish my degree and become an engineer, building technologies for agricultural businesses ... For example we need to phase out diesel and fossil fuel energy and start seeking better alternatives, like a well designed solar tractor."

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NPS President retired Vice Adm. Ronald A. Route congratulates Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) summer intern Samuel Villavicencio after a brief presentation of his research project, "The Classification of Trees in Waveform." A student at nearby Hartnell College, Villavicencio was chosen and paired with NPS professors and researchers to develop research relevant to the STEM disciplines.