San Diego University Imperial Valley students head to national Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities conference for tips and networking

By ROMAN FLORES, Staff Writer

Sunday, September 26, 2010 1:09 AM PDT

Hundreds of students from around the country came together for the 24th annual Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront last week, including El Centro’s own Marlena Rascon.

HACU and its annual conference aims to aid Hispanic students and members of the HACU community through internships, scholarships and career development programs, according to a letter from Jerry Sanders, mayor of San Diego.

Throughout the conference, students get to listen to officials in various educational, federal and business agencies including the United States Department of State, Department of the Interior, Secret Service, National Security Agency and the United States Department of Agriculture.

“We got to listen to the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (Leon Panetta) and (Rep.) Bob Filner,” Rascon said of her experience at the three-day conference. “I never thought I’d be able to hear from someone like that. It was really impressive.”

Rascon, a senior at SDSU-IV who majors in international business, and SDSU-IV mathematics major Rosa Lemus were both sponsored by the USDA through its Rural Development office in El Centro. It was through that office Rascon heard about HACU and the annual conference.

“Edgar (Ortega) had just gone to Florida and he told me about HACU,” she said. “All of a sudden my study abroad counselor at San Diego State (Miriam Castañon) told me, ‘I want you to go to that conference,’ so I said okay,” Rascon said.

During the conference students go to not only pick from a list of various presenters but also frequent the exhibit hall in order to network with the agencies in attendance in hopes of getting internships of high-interest.

“I thought it was going to be purely business but there were people from psychology, liberal studies, agriculture, graphic design … it’s for all majors,” Rascon said. “I liked all the information.

“It kind of pushed me a little bit to start an internship somewhere,” she said.

For more information about the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities visit www.hacu.net

>> Staff Writer Roman Flores can be reached at 760-337-3439 or rflores@ivpressonline.com
5 things I learned at the HACU conference by Marlena Rascon:

Tell your parents right away where you want to go to college. Don’t let them stop you from pursuing your collegiate goals.

Don’t have too many commitments at one time. Learn to say no.

Learn to be a leader in a group setting. Get yourself out there and try not to be shy.

Make contacts and talk to people. Don’t just take a flier and leave; make them remember you.

Be ready to relocate for new opportunities.