

UC Riverside Adds a NASA Veteran to Leadership Team

Alphonso V. Diaz is the new Vice Chancellor for Administration at UCR

(January 4, 2006)

Alphonso Diaz

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (www.ucr.edu) -- Alphonso V. Diaz, a former high-ranking administrator at NASA, has been appointed Vice Chancellor for Administration. The appointment must still be approved by the UC Board of Regents.

Diaz brings a wealth of administrative expertise from a 40-year career at NASA, including involvement in projects such as the Viking exploration of Mars and the Hubble Space Telescope, as well as management of multi-billion dollar budgets.



From January, 1998, to August, 2004, he was the director of the Goddard Space Flight Center. His final title at NASA headquarters was associate administrator, science mission directorate. He retired in August, 2005.

At UC Riverside, Diaz will oversee the work of nearly 600 people, including employees in physical plant; human resources; financial services; design and construction; the child development center; police services; material management; the bookstore; environmental health and safety; transportation and parking services; accounting/payroll; fleet; mail services; printing; and the division's technology services. Diaz succeeds C. Michael Webster, who held the job for 13 years before resigning in June. Jack Azzaretto has served as interim vice chancellor since that time.

“Al was in charge of one of NASA’s largest and most renowned centers, the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, where he had overall responsibility for getting scientists and engineers to work together seamlessly to develop, launch, and manage many large space missions,” said Chancellor France A. Córdoba. “He knows how to bring people together to accomplish goals, and how to identify and nurture talent. At NASA Headquarters he had an even larger portfolio, as he was in charge of most of the science missions under NASA’s purview. That’s a lot of responsibility. I know that with his wealth of experience, Al will help move UCR forward, at mach speed.”

Diaz said that he believes in the importance of individual contributions, and individual employees. "I believe that every employee needs to understand his or her relationship to the successful achievement of the organization's mission," he said. "It is essential that we take advantage of the energy and creativity of each and every member of the staff."

Diaz began his career at NASA's Langley Research Center in 1964. At Langley, he worked in a variety of technical management positions, principally on the Viking Project, the first to analyze the surface material on Mars in 1976. Diaz also has served as the International Solar-Polar Mission (now Ulysses Mission) Program Manager, the Galileo Program Manager, Manager of Planetary Advanced Programs, and as Deputy Director of the Solar System Exploration Division.

Diaz has received four Presidential Rank Awards; three as Meritorious Executive in 1990, 1995 and in 2003, and one Distinguished Award in 1996. He also received six NASA Medals – a Distinguished Service Medal in 2005; an Outstanding Leadership Medal for his work at the Goddard Space Flight Center in 2002 and 2004; an Exceptional Service Medal for his work at the Goddard Space Flight Center in 1999; a NASA Outstanding Leadership Medal in 1994 for his work on the Hubble Space Telescope First Servicing Mission; and an Exceptional Scientific Achievement Medal for his work on the Viking Project in 1977.

Diaz received a Bachelor of Science in Physics from St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pa., and a Master of Science degree in Physics from Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va. In addition, he attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Sloan School of Management as a NASA Sloan Fellow and received a Master of Science in management in 1986. He also holds two honorary doctorates.

In 2005, he was named Engineer of the Year at the Hispanic Engineers National Achievement Awards Conference and earned a Lifetime Achievement Award from Hispanic Business Incorporated. He is married to Angela Phillips Diaz.