NEWS RELEASE

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COLLEGE OF MARIN STUDENT CHOSEN TO PARTICIPATE IN NSCS’ DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARS PROGRAM

KENTFIELD, Calif., May 31, 2006-- The National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS) has announced that College of Marin student Alfredo D’Arena, 28, has been chosen to participate in the highly selective and competitive Distinguished Scholars Program, an intensive learning and internship experience designed exclusively for NSCS members. D’Arena has had a long journey to arrive at this milestone.

“This is a great honor for Alfredo and a testament to his talent, perseverance, and hard work,” said COM Superintendent/President Frances White, Ph.D. “I am very proud of him and all that he has achieved and all that he can achieve.”

After several years as a manager in the food service industry, D’Arena realized he needed more education if he wanted to succeed in the business. People with four-year degrees were getting promoted faster than he was and he thought he could do better for himself.

“I started to realize what the next 40 years of my life would be like,” said D’Arena. The NCSC program will allow him to study in his new field of political science in Chicago. He then will head to the University of California, Los Angeles in the fall to study pre-law and international business. He is the first in his family to attend college.

D’Arena has a two-year degree in culinary arts from Johnson & Wales University in Rhode Island and worked for a time in Los Angeles restaurants with Downtown Disney and as an assistant kitchen manager with Houston Restaurants.

“I was a manager but because I didn’t have a four-year degree I would always be pigeon-holed in this one area,” he said. “I noticed how others were being treated who had four-year degrees. I knew I was capable of doing something better.”

It was an epiphany for D’Arena, who knew working his way through more college would mean several years of hard work. “I wanted to do that,” he said.

As a youth in Connecticut, D’Arena hadn’t always applied himself. He’d loved cooking and food and thought that was his natural path. Suddenly he had a new goal to transfer to the University of California. However, he first transferred to College of Marin to increase his chances by becoming a resident and transferring from in-state, and, he said, because “it was beautiful.”

D’Arena jumped in with both feet. He participated in student government, served as secretary for the Associated Students of the College of Marin and as a student senator.

“I was always interested in politics,” he said. “Everyone told me I argue well and I think critically.”
He was inspired by political science instructors and he began studying Italian, the language of his heritage. He worked as a waiter to pay the bills and took as many classes as he could.

D’Arena worked on the Access Committee, tackling difficult issues in the campus Master Plan.

“He was able to say fairly tough things directly to people but in a nice way,” said Kathryn Freschi, who worked on the Access Committee with D’Arena and also taught him in a first year Italian class. “He has an uncommon ability to be perceptive about people and to work with people in tough situations. I think we’re going to see Alfredo’s name in a prominent light some day.”

From College of Marin, D’Arena heads to Chicago this summer as part of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars Distinguished Scholars Program. He will work in a full-time internship to further his international and political science studies and study at Loyola University. He hopes to be an intern this summer at a law firm that handles security investments or works with multinational corporations. Then he transfers to UCLA where he will focus on pre-law studies with an emphasis on economics.

“He will be a good politician because he is able to hear what people say,” said Alexandra Magallanes Rivera, an academic counselor who worked with D’Arena. “I don’t think he takes no for an answer. He came here and realized what it meant to him and where his passion was. He had a vision and he really took advantage of all the opportunities here.”

[Photograph of D’Arena is available—please call Cathy Summa-Wolfe, 415-485-9528]

About College of Marin
College of Marin has been providing exceptional educational opportunities for students of all ages since 1926. Each semester, nearly 8,000 students are enrolled in over 1,100 credit classes. An additional 6,000 students take advantage of the College’s many outstanding community education and community services classes. The College administration is located in Kentfield, CA. The College also operates the Indian Valley campus in Novato, CA. College of Marin is fully accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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