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Javier Read de Alaniz is Named UCSB's 2015-16 Plous Award Winner

Javier Read de Alaniz, an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at UC Santa Barbara, has received the 2015-16 Harold J. Plous Award.

Presented by the College of Letters and Science, the Plous award is one of the university's most prestigious faculty honors. It is given annually to an assistant professor in the humanities, social sciences or natural sciences for exceptional achievement in research, teaching, and service to the university.

The award was established in 1957 to honor the memory of Harold J. Plous, an assistant professor of economics. Read de Alaniz will showcase his research when he delivers the annual Plous Lecture next spring.

"I am extraordinarily pleased that Professor Read de Alaniz is this year's Plous award recipient," said Pierre Wiltzius, the Bruce and Susan Worster Dean of Mathematical, Physical, and Life Sciences. "In a short few years he has built an excellent research program in important areas of organic chemistry, and has become a great teacher. In addition to his classroom teaching, Javier has been a wonderful mentor to many undergraduate and graduate students. I particularly commend him on his advising of underrepresented minorities."

Said Steven Buratto, professor and chair of chemistry and biochemistry, "Professor Javier Read de Alaniz's selection as this year Plous Award winner confirms what we

have known in the chemistry department for many years. Professor Read de Alaniz is a shining star and a professor of the highest order. He runs a world-class research effort in organic chemistry; he is a dynamic and dedicated lecturer; he is an outstanding mentor to his undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral researchers; and he serves as an ambassador for chemistry by promoting our science to the community at large and inspiring the next-generation chemists. We are indeed proud to have him as our colleague.”

Joining the faculty at UCSB in 2009, Read de Alaniz earned his Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Colorado State University and continued his studies as a UC President’s Postdoctoral Scholar at UC Irvine. His current research focuses on developing more efficient chemical reactions for new materials and applications in synthesis. He seeks to make these materials in a way that is both economically efficient and environmentally sound, using sustainable resources that reduce or eliminate hazardous chemicals.

Read de Alaniz’s research also involves creating a novel class of organic photochromic materials that undergo a reversible color change upon exposure to light. In addition, his development of novel synthetic organics promises to provide chemists with new tools to accelerate drug discovery and material synthesis. His research has been widely published in high-impact journals and generally supported by extramural funding.

Read de Alaniz is the recipient of numerous honors, including the National Science Foundation’s CAREER Award, the Amgen Young Investigator Award and the Eli Lilly New Faculty Award. He leads an exciting and productive research program in fundamental and applied chemistry, as well as establishing bridges with materials science.

A gifted and popular instructor, Read de Alaniz has earned a strong reputation among students as an effective and caring educator in large introductory lectures as well as more advanced undergraduate and graduate courses. During his time at UCSB he has led active research groups that include undergraduates, Ph.D. students and postdoctoral scholars. He also has been an innovator, developing workshops such as “Academics 2 Industry,” which exposes students to the pharmaceutical-biotechnology sector and fosters practical connections that benefit students across disciplines.

Read de Alaniz also helped establish an honors lecture and laboratory courses in organic chemistry, enrollment for which has grown steadily. Students have commented that they not only learn the fundamentals in his courses, they also come away with a sense of how to apply those concepts. Equally important, they have the sense that Read de Alaniz cares about their success as students and as individuals.

Contributing significantly to the success of underrepresented students in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines, Read de Alaniz served as the main faculty mentor for UC's Leadership Excellence Through Advanced Degree (UC-LEAD) program from 2009-2014. The program is designed to encourage strong upper-division undergraduates who have experienced adversity to pursue graduate training in STEM fields. Read de Alaniz serves as the faculty adviser to the Society of Chicanos and Native American Scientists and is actively involved in the Partnership for Research and Education in Materials Program, which seek to promote advanced degree attainment among Hispanic students.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.