Cañada College

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Robert Hood, 650-306-3340

# Menlo Park Student Helps Test Insulation Capacity of New Spacecraft, Now He's Presenting Findings at Geophysical Conference

*17-year-old Hassany Alejandre will present at American Geophysical Union fall meeting Dec. 13*

REDWOOD CITY – Last summer, while most 17-year-olds were worrying how to find money to fill the gas tank or whether their friends were at the local shopping mall, Hassany Alejandre of Menlo Park was working with Stanford University graduate students testing the insulation capacity of a spaceship that will serve as the first space-based gravitational wave observatory.

Now, Alejandre has been asked to present his findings at the annual American Geophysical Union fall meeting in San Francisco's Moscone Center on Thursday, Dec. 13 – a meeting that will be attended by more than 14,000 of the nation's top scientists.

"It's a little intimidating when I stop to think about it," Alejandre said. "Some of the greatest minds in the world will be attending the conference and I'm presenting my poster as a high school student. It's very exciting."

Of course, Alejandre isn't your typical high school student. He's already enrolled at Cañada College in Redwood City where he's finishing his high school courses and simultaneously taking college courses in calculus and biology. "I'm enrolled in Middle College, which allows me to finish my high school courses and start college early," he said. "I eventually want to enroll in medical school."

Alejandre's poster presentation will focus on LISA, the Laser Interferometer Space Antenna that will be launched by NASA in 2015. LISA will use an advanced system of laser interferometry for detecting and measuring gravitational waves. It will help answer the questions: How did the Universe begin? Does time have a beginning and an end? Does space have edges? As part of an internship, Alejandre spent a month last summer with graduate students in Stanford's Astrophysics Department testing the insulation capacity of the spaceship.

"I had to build a circuit board that could read temperatures outside and inside the insulator," he said. "I really enjoyed it but it was a very busy time because I had to ride my bike from home in the morning to Cañada to take summer courses and then back to Stanford in the afternoon for my internship."

Because of his internship, Alejandre was asked to participate in the American Geophysical Union's Bright Students Training as Research Scientists (Bright STaRS) program. It provides a dedicated forum for approximately 50 high school students to present their own research results to the scientific community at this fall's meeting. Alejandre's research will be published in the meeting abstract volume and program; he will participate in a dedicated afternoon poster session in the meeting exhibit hall; he'll be able to attend technical sessions and exhibits; and he'll have lunch with scientists and symposium speakers.

**Editor's Note: High resolution photos of Hassany Alejandre are available by contacting Robert Hood at 650-306-3340 or at hoodr@smccd.edu.**