

# McFarlane finds insights to present from past

**Dr. William McFarlane,** associate professor, anthropology, has two classroom settings – one in manicured suburbia, the other at a pre-Columbian excavation site in western Honduras.

McFarlane is the first JCCC College Scholar to present in the 2009-2010 academic year, giving two lectures:

**1. Archaeology of Communities, by Communities and for Communities: New Research into the Past, Present and Future of the Jesús de Otoro Valley of Honduras,** at 11 a.m. Monday, Oct. 12, in the Craig Community Auditorium.

**2. Picking Up the Pieces: Understanding Post-Collapse Societies on the Edge of Mesoamerica,** at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 14, in the Hudson Auditorium, the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art. A reception precedes the lecture at 6:30 p.m.

The reasons for the ninth-century collapse of Mesoamerica, long a source of mystery and inquiry, will be the topic of McFarlane's evening lecture. He suggests that archaeologists are only now beginning to understand the complex web of environmental, socio-political and economic facts that caused the civilization's demise. Based on a decade of research in northwestern Honduras, McFarlane will describe a fascinating pattern of resiliency and renewal to the devastating trends of political collapse and abandonment of political centers.



"I want people to see the relevance of the past on their lives today," McFarlane said of his evening presentation. "I will talk about how archaeologists have come to new conclusions about how the collapse of civilizations occurred and how people responded to them. In the middle of this country's current economic crisis, people are tuned in to how civilizations can fall apart and what we can do to come back from those events. Archaeology can tell us something about that."



Dr. William McFarlane leads field studies for JCCC students in western Honduras.



The daytime presentation focuses on archeologists' new emphasis on community-based archaeology, specifically the goals of research in the Jesús de Otoro valley.

For two summers, McFarlane and Dr. Miranda Stockett, adjunct professor, anthropology, have led students in archaeological field studies as part of community-based research in Jesús de Otoro valley. Last year, students excavated in a residential area of a Lenca community in the valley. This year students moved to the east side of the site's central plaza. Unearthed artifacts are left with the Casa de Cultura, a civic center and tourist attraction in the valley, and McFarlane and Stockett file reports with the Honduran Institute of Anthropology and History. McFarlane's daytime lecture will look at the new socially-constituted community model of archaeology.

"We are trying to create a sustainable economy. Twenty years ago, it would have been surprising to talk about the contemporary local community in the context of archaeology," McFarlane said. "The goal of Jesús de Otoro valley project is to eventually bring Honduran students into field studies so they can learn skills that are widely applicable to the wider workplace. And we want to give the community a better sense of its past and help it develop resources to create an influx of tourist dollars with the Casa de Cultura."



As part of the JCCC College Scholar program, McFarlane will present a seminar, *The Future of Archaeology: Lessons Learned from Undergraduate Research at the JCCC International Archaeological Field School*.

McFarlane has a bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of Central Florida and a master's and doctorate in anthropology from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has conducted archaeological research for more than 10 years, including the region of Niagara Falls in New York, the Bay Area of California and southeastern Mesoamerica. His primary research interests include the pre-Columbian culture of Mesoamerica, stone tool analysis, political economy and the formation of corporate and

cooperative groups. He is the co-director of the Proyecto Arqueológico de Otoro in western Honduras.

The three other JCCC College Scholars will be Dr. Sarah Boyle, associate professor, history; Dr. Margaret Kincaid, adjunct assistant professor, science; and Eve Blobaum, assistant professor, sociology. The JCCC College Scholars program was initiated during the 2008-2009 academic year to showcase faculty research.

For more information about the JCCC College Scholars program, contact Karen Martley, director, Staff and Organizational Development, 913-469-8500, ext. 3467. [Im](#)