



# MESA CONNECT

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Fall 2006/Winter 2007  
Volume 28, Number 4

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE MATHEMATICS, ENGINEERING, SCIENCE ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAM

## Algebra Academy prepares students for success

**T**HE MESA CENTERS at UC Santa Cruz, UC Santa Barbara, Imperial Valley and Mendocino College participated in Summer Algebra Academies that reached over 1,200 pre-college students throughout California.

The five-week Algebra Academy, an initiative of the University of California Office of the President, is designed to improve the algebra skills of incoming eighth and ninth graders and increase their chances of going to college. Each student, sup-

ported by a high student-teacher ratio and an innovative curriculum, had an intense, productive learning experience.

Several MESA centers, including those in Imperial Valley and Santa Cruz, worked in partnership with other local educational and community programs to bring this vital program to area students. Other centers, such as MESA's UC Santa Barbara site, were the primary organizers of the Academies.

"Algebra is a gate-keeping course for college preparation and marks the start of a college-going pathway," said Olivia Palacio, the director of the Algebra Academy at Fillmore High School in the city of Fillmore (UC Santa Barbara MESA Center). The Summer Algebra Academy starts incoming ninth graders building all their skills to higher education and a satisfying career."

Nearly 40 students at Fillmore High participated in the school's first Algebra Academy. Working in teams, the students learned problem-solving skills, increased their computer literacy, developed team building and leadership skills, and participated in

practical hands-on demonstrations of the concepts that they learned.

At Santa Paula High School, a team of 18 staff members taught the academy courses to 90 students. The faculty included four academic teachers, two counselors, two intern counselors, two UCSB MESA engineering student mentors, four tutors and three teacher assistants.

"The involvement of MESA college students in the Algebra Academies as teachers, teacher assistants and mentors provided the students with very positive role model," said Bob Cota, MESA director at UC Santa Barbara.

The academies also included a college readiness component. The students attended sessions on the course requirements for getting into college, academic planning, applying for financial aid and exploring career interests. They then presented their new knowledge to a session with their parents.

"When the program started, we had five students, who thought it was possible to go to college," said Jacob Martinez, coordinator of the academy at Santa Paula High. "Now they all think so, even the ones that struggle."

At the end of the Algebra Academy at Fillmore High School, the student expressed their enthusiasm about their experience in spirited cheers that they wrote. One cheer went like this: "Working hard, count to ten. Math and science can get you in!" ■

JACOB MARTINEZ



Students at Pajaro Valley High School in Watsonville attended college readiness classes as part of the Summer Algebra Academy.