



Creating college bound communities

1101 Pacific Avenue, Suite 210
Santa Cruz, California 95060
Phone: (831) 459-3500
Fax: (831) 459-3570
<http://epc.ucsc.edu>

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Jaimie Vargas
Director of Development & Communication
Phone: 831.459.1747
Email: jvargas@ucsc.edu

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6TH ANNUAL COLLEGE FAMILY CONFERENCE INSPIRES STUDENTS AND FAMILIES TO ACHIEVE HIGHER EDUCATION DREAMS

UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center Hosts 700 Students And Families At All-Day Event, Featuring Workshops On College Planning And Awareness, Parent/Student Panels, And Financial Aid And Scholarships

(SANTA CRUZ, CA) – How can K-12 schools and universities work together to create college-bound communities? How can students and parents be inspired to make their university dreams a reality? The UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center (EPC) is committed to improving student achievement and increasing college-going rates across the Monterey Bay region by building college awareness with its school, college, business, and community partners. As part of its ongoing student academic preparation efforts, the EPC will host the 6th Annual College Family Conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz campus on Saturday, February 24, 2007, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. About 700 students and families from the Watsonville/Pajaro Valley, Seaside, Gonzales, Chualar, Greenfield, Soledad, and Castroville communities are expected to attend the all-day event, featuring workshops about preparing for college, financial aid and scholarships, and college/student life.

“Parents need to hear from other parents that college is possible for all kids. Students cannot imagine college in their future if they have no experience. At the conference, families can tour the campus together and hear from undergraduates what college life is really like. The experience has a great impact: the Educational Partnership Center has doubled college-going rates across the region in our partnership high schools, in part because of opportunities like the College Family Conference,” said Carrol Moran, executive director of the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center.

Recent research reports about educational opportunity find that students face significant roadblocks on their pathway to college, including a lack of academic preparation, college awareness, and understanding of college options and financial aid resources. These roadblocks loom larger for underrepresented students and

students from low-income backgrounds, and the achievement gap means that too few students are meeting college eligibility requirements and attending two- and four-year colleges. California ranks below all but one state in sending high school seniors to four-year universities. The Educational Partnership Center's impact data and evaluation supports the need for increased college awareness and readiness and underscores the importance of family support for students' college aspirations.

“One of the strongest predictors of students attending college is whether or not their parents went to college, and raising awareness and engaging in conversations about college is essential for families to make good decisions. The College Family Conference is so important because we are starting the college-going tradition among first-generation students by exposing them to campus, demystifying the college process, and debunking the myths around the costs of higher education. The conference is an experiential opportunity that allows parents to actually visualize where they will drop off their sons and daughters,” said Pablo Reguerin, deputy director of the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center.

The College Family Conference will cover a variety of college awareness and preparation topics, including fun, hands-on activities for the whole family; student/parent panels to address questions about college life; and a tour of the UCSC campus. The A-G workshop provides valuable information on the high school course-taking pattern required to be eligible for UC and CSU, and the financial aid workshop will help families understand what types of financial aid and scholarships are available and how to access these resources, such as completing the FAFSA and Cal Grant application. A panel of professionals will offer information and advice on successful career and college pathways.

Consuelo Alba-Speyer, family involvement coordinator, works closely with families in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District and is creating Parent Peer Networks and training Parent Leaders: “This conference really helps parents visualize their children attending college in the future. It also helps them understand how the whole family can and should prepare their students for college as soon as possible.”

One of the most popular workshops is the Parent Panel where parents can address their questions and concerns to other parents with children in college. The Parent Panel will address safety issues, how to let go, trust, and being an advocate for your child's education. Students will also have an opportunity to learn about all the aspects of college life from current undergraduates, such as transitioning from home to college, balancing school with a social life, and how to create an academically enriched academic life on campus. Interacting with the student panel allows middle and high school students to ask important questions they may not feel comfortable asking in the presence of their parents. Both parents and students will hear from UCSC Student Life representatives about the many student-run organizations, academic resources, campus

safety, and housing resources available to help them succeed. Conference participants can also attend the College and Community Resource Fair and learn about other UC, CSU, private, and community college options, as well as available resources to support students in achieving their higher education goals.

Conference speakers include Carrol Moran, executive director, UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center; UCSC Acting Chancellor George Blumenthal; and various parents and students from the community who will describe their path to college. The Seaside High School Chamber Group will provide entertainment during lunch, and the Rainbow Theatre Group, a UCSC student organization, will be featured in the Closing Session.

With academic planning and preparation, postsecondary education is an affordable and attainable goal for all students in California. The 6th Annual College Family Conference supports students and families on the college-going and career pathways with vital information, resources, and motivation to help make their university dreams a reality. The conference is an important part of the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center's comprehensive, early college outreach efforts to support students, families, and schools and contributes to the success of the GEAR UP; Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP); and the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) programs, under the umbrella of the EPC.

All middle and high school students and their families from the Educational Partnership Center's partner K-12 schools in Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties are invited to attend the College Family Conference; families should check with their school sites about free registration and bus transportation. For more information, contact LAURIE SCOLARI at (831) 212-1717 or call the conference hotline at (831) 459-1989.

About the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center

Established in 1999, the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center (EPC) coordinates new and ongoing outreach efforts of the University of California, Santa Cruz with the goal of increasing access and opportunity to higher education for students across the Monterey Bay and San Jose/Silicon Valley regions. EPC is a research- and data-driven, umbrella organization for an array of complimentary, integrated academic preparation programs, serving students, teachers, and families from kindergarten through college. The mission of the Educational Partnership Center is to create college-bound communities that improve student learning and increase college-going rates among students from low-income and traditionally non-college-going families in collaboration with school, college, business, and community partners. Through a variety of direct services and grant-funded projects, EPC offers: tutoring, mentoring, academic planning and counseling, leadership training, test preparation, college awareness and enrichment, and teacher professional development.

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If you are interested in covering the College Family Conference, scheduling an interview, or have other media inquiries, please call JAIMIE VARGAS, EPC Director of Development & Communication at (831) 459-1747 or email Jaimie at jevargas@ucsc.edu.