



Creating college bound communities

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 5, 2006

“EXPERIENCE COLLEGE LIFE...BE A STUDENT FOR THE DAY,” UCSC TO HOST 5TH ANNUAL FAMILY CONFERENCE, MAY 13, 2006

(SANTA CRUZ, CA) – How can schools and universities connect to help students, especially minority students, realize their college aspirations? To address the national need for greater college awareness among students, parents, and teachers and to provide the necessary tools for parents to support their children’s goals, the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center (EPC) will host the 5th Annual Family Conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) campus on Saturday, May 13, 2006 from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at College 9 and College 10. Approximately 600 to 800 families from Watsonville, north Monterey County, Seaside, Greenfield, and Soledad will participate in the all-day event. The conference is part of EPC’s GEAR UP and MESA partnership activities; GEAR UP is a federally-funded program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The goal at this year’s conference is to expose prospective students and their families to the UCSC college experience.

Research around the issue of college awareness and readiness indicates that students need school and family support to aspire to college. “We had a good time and learned a lot,” said parent Carmen Limón about her family’s participation in last year’s family conference. “I used to be afraid of not being able to support my child’s dream to go to college, but at the conference I asked a lot of questions, received great advice, and came to the realization that, yes, it can be done.” Students also need accurate information about college requirements and high school course patterns; a U.S. Department of Education review (2005) of college remediation and attrition rates finds that more than 50 percent of students entering college are required to take remedial courses.

During the family conference, middle and high school students and their families will experience college life through tours of the campus and lunch in the College 8 dining hall, which helps prospective students learn about UCSC' unique system. Participants will also attend either a parent panel or student panel to discuss the college experience with UCSC students, staff, and faculty. These panel discussions will help parents understand what is required to prepare children for higher education and help students understand the what is required of them to be successful in college.

“For many families this will be their first experience in a university environment”, said Consuelo Alba-Speyer, GEAR UP Family Involvement Coordinator working with schools in the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. “It’s important for them to see how their children would live and study and be supported on campus.” Research from the University of California, Santa Cruz (Azmitia & Cooper, 2001) suggests that the influence of friends and family on students’ aspirations is considerable. Regardless of ethnicity and gender, students benefit from emotional support, academic help, and encouragement from their peers who have higher English and mathematics grades.

Conference keynote speakers include Oscar Rios, Watsonville City Council Member; Adrienne Harrell, Director of the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Schools Program; and Rosa Apodaca, UCSC Alumna and a member of El Teatro Campesino, an award winning Latino/Chicano Theater Company. Conference participants will also enjoy performances by Mariachi Tlaconete and the Rainbow Theatre Group, two UCSC student groups.

The 5th Annual Family Conference is part of a comprehensive, early college outreach effort to support low-income and first generation college-going students. UCSC, GEAR UP, Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), and MESA are sponsoring this event. All students and parents involved in GEAR UP and MESA programs are invited to attend the conference; families should check with their schools sites about registering to attend. Registration is free, and childcare will be provided. For more information or to register for the conference, please contact CONSUELO ALBA-SPEYER at (831) 212-1707 or SANDRA CERVANTES at (831) 212-1731.

About the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center

The UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center (EPC) serves a four-county region in central California—Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and San Benito—and links statewide K-12, higher education, community, and business sector partners. The mission of the EPC 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. In 2005, the EPC provided direct services, including mentoring, tutoring, academic counseling and planning, leadership training, test preparation, academic enrichment, and college awareness and preparation, to more than 37,000 students and families. Other recent achievements include two six-year awards from the U.S. Department of Education's GEAR UP program totaling \$16.3 million and a \$1.56 million award from the National Institutes of Health for the Assessing Science, Inquiry, and Leadership Skills (AScILS) research project.

About Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP)

GEAR UP is a U.S. Department of Education-funded program designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education. The EPC's GEAR UP partnerships include academic and college advising and tutoring for students, college planning and financial aid information for parents, professional development for teachers, and the opportunity to build strong partnerships between schools and the community to encourage a college-going community. In addition, all GEAR UP participants will have multiple opportunities to visit local college campuses on field trips. Each school district has the opportunity to work with the EPC to shape a program that meets their specific needs, and ongoing data review allows teachers to modify instruction, identify students in need of additional assistance, and conduct program evaluation.

About the Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP)

EAOP provides a variety of year-round services designed to increase the academic preparation, awareness, and motivation of middle and high school students toward higher education and to inform parents about available educational opportunities. The goal of the program is to create a cohort of college-bound ambassadors who are excited about the prospect of college and are ready to share information about college preparation with their peers.

About the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Schools Program

The MESA Schools Program provides academic development for middle school and high school students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds to succeed in mathematics and science and pursue undergraduate degrees in mathematics-based majors. MESA motivates students by engaging them in fun, hands-on mathematics, engineering, and science activities and by exposing them to career opportunities in those fields. The MESA Academic model includes: MESA Day curriculum and competitions; MESA periods in school; academic preparation for college; career and college exploration; teacher professional development opportunities for MESA Advisors; and parent leadership training. The MESA Schools Program compliments California content standards and reinforces classroom instruction.

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