

\$4 million outreach grant focuses on Monterey County 6th and 7th graders

By Jennifer McNulty

It's never too early to start encouraging children to prepare for college, and the federal government has awarded \$4 million to the UCSC Educational Partnership Center (EPC) to do just that among sixth and seventh graders in south Monterey County.

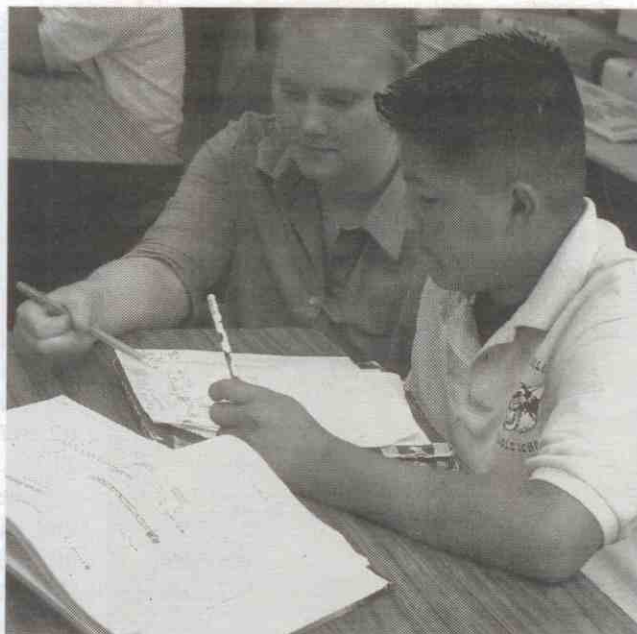
Funding from the U.S. Department of Education will expand the EPC's reach to about 900 students at Chualar Elementary School, Fairview Middle School, and Vista Verde Middle School.

The six-year grant supports outreach to these students through graduation from high school.

"Helping students imagine college and careers in their future provides them with an incentive to work hard in school starting in the sixth grade," said EPC executive director Carrol Moran, principal investigator on the grant. "We help students aspire to college and ensure that they have the academic preparation that allows them to live their dream."

The grant from the federal government's Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative will provide academic and college advising, tutoring, counseling, and coaching for students, as well as professional development in language and mathematics for teachers and outreach to families about college planning and financial aid.

Established in 1998, the EPC has more



An academic intern tutors a student in a middle school GEAR UP program.

than doubled college-going rates among its partnership schools and more than doubled the number of students in GEAR UP schools who pass algebra by eighth grade, said Moran. Algebra is an important "gatekeeper" course that prepares students to meet college-admissions requirements.

In southern Monterey County, more than 80 percent of students in participating schools meet the federal guidelines for poverty, and more than half are English-language learners, noted Moran. With the infusion of new funds, students in the 2012 and 2013 high school graduating classes will benefit from services beginning this fall that include the support of undergraduate academic interns from Hartnell College, Monterey Peninsula College, and UCSC who serve as tutors and mentors.

currents.ucsc.edu/06-07/08-28/grant.asp