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1999 - 2009

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 10, 2010

STUDENTS TEST THEIR MATH, SCIENCE SKILLS: “Activate Your Future”
400 Middle and High School Students Compete in Annual MESA Day Preliminary
Competition at UC Santa Cruz, Saturday, March 6, 2010

(SANTA CRUZ, CA) – Speeding mousetrap cars, turning windmills, and flying balsawood gliders are some of the exciting engineering designs at the 2010 MESA Day Preliminary Competition at the UCSC Jack Baskin School of Engineering on Saturday, March 6, 2010.

About 400 middle and high school students from partner schools in Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Salinas, Gonzales, and Soledad convened at the UC Santa Cruz campus to compete against their peers in a variety of science, engineering, and mathematics projects, putting their design, presentation, critical thinking, performance, and teamwork skills to the test.

“The competitions at MESA Day provide an opportunity for students to apply their knowledge in science and engineering in a hands-on, creative way that’s exciting and fun. Students also get the chance to spend the day with real scientists, engineers, and other industry professionals who judge their projects,” said Alexandria Leckliter, Interim Director of the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Schools Program. “It’s an eye-opener for them. For some students, this creates the motivation to go to college.”

The March 6 event was organized by MESA at the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center (EPC) to increase college-going rates across the region and prepare more students, especially underrepresented and educationally disadvantaged students, for success in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields and careers.

MESA Day is the culmination of students’ year-long efforts. Working with their MESA Teacher Advisor, students follow curricula designed to reinforce California State Math and Science Standards. The hands-on MESA projects allow students to apply and test essential concepts in a variety of competitions, ranging from mousetrap car races and model bisected brains, to civil structures, airplane gliders, and web design. This year, students competed in new competitions



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such as the Windmill Energy Challenge where students used captured wind energy to move a car along a track, and the Prosthetic Arm Demonstration where students designed and built a functioning prosthetic arm. Through advisor mentoring and innovative curriculum, MESA is helping students develop the critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary to become the scientists and engineers that California needs, said Leckliter.

More than 20 university faculty and business and industry professionals from Cisco Systems, Santa Cruz Biotechnology, City of Santa Cruz, Lockheed Martin Corporate, Bay Federal Credit Union, and others volunteered to judge the competitions. Participants and their parents, teachers and others were welcomed by Arthur Ramirez, Dean of the UCSC School of Engineering and professor of electrical engineering at UC Santa Cruz, and by Rafael Granados, Interim Executive Director of the Educational Partnership Center.

“I can relate to the joy and excitement of designing engineering projects and putting science and math concepts to work in real life,” Ramirez told the assembled students. “Can you imagine getting paid for working on your MESA project all day? That’s what a career in math and science can bring you.”

In addition to the competition events, students and families also had the opportunity to participate in workshops on the science of nanotechnology, astrophysical and planetary sciences, women in information technology, internet safety, and college readiness. The closing awards ceremony including the keynote speaker, Lourdes Chang, a UCSC Masters student in Computer Science, and MESA alumni.

For more information about the MESA Day Preliminary Competition on March 6 or other media inquiries, please contact Alexandria Leckliter, interim director of MESA, at (831) 459-1760 or alexand@ucsc.edu.

About UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center

Established in 1999, the Educational Partnership Center (EPC) coordinates academic preparation efforts on behalf of UC 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 integrated programs, serving students, teachers, families, and schools from kindergarten through college.

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