



*Creating college bound communities*

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **SUMMER ALGEBRA ACADEMY LAUNCHES AT WATSONVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, SOLEDAD HIGH SCHOOL**

(SANTA CRUZ, CA) – To increase students’ success in algebra, an essential “gatekeeper” course for college eligibility, the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center (EPC) has held the Summer Algebra Academy pilot program as part of its GEAR UP and MESA partnership activities.

Approximately 60 incoming ninth grade students from the feeder middle schools into Watsonville, Pajaro Valley, and Soledad High Schools have participated in a five-week program centered around a college awareness theme, which focused on increasing academic performance in mathematics and creating a college-going culture. The program at PVHS ran from June 19, 2006 through July 21, 2006, and the program at SHS ran June 23, 2006 through July 26, 2006.

The goal of the Summer Algebra Academy program is to prepare students for success in high school. Students receive 90 hours of engaging, hands-on mathematics instruction to increase readiness for ninth grade algebra as well as 40 hours of college awareness services, including tutoring, mentoring, intensive counseling, and academic and college planning. Students also take field trips to visit local college campuses. A unique part of this program is the family involvement component. Parents are introduced to higher education opportunities and empowered with knowledge to help their children succeed. “Parents know this is a great opportunity,” said Consuelo Alba-Speyer, EPC Family Involvement Coordinator. “All of our parents have committed to actively participate in the Parent Academy, which includes field trips to universities and college awareness workshops.” Together, students and families will develop a 10-year academic plan.

The research-driven model is being adapted from other successful algebra academies implemented by the UC Office of the President in different parts of California. At one such high school, algebra I grade

comparison data (2003) finds that Academy students performed better than non-Academy students: 83 percent of Academy students received a “C” or better versus 48 percent of non-Academy students, and only six percent of Academy students failed the course compared to 34 percent of non-Academy students.

By expanding the school year with non-traditional classroom time, teachers have the opportunity for creative teaching. The Summer Algebra Academy program helps build social capital within the high school and greater community and introduces students and families, many of whom will be first-generation college students, to postsecondary educational opportunities. Students are exposed early and start the planning and preparation to stay on track to go to college. Importantly, this is not a remedial summer school program; instead, the focus is on getting students ready for success in high school and proactively addressing any potential barriers to going to college. They overcome their fear of high school facilities and develop important relationships with high school teachers and outreach staff they can trust and look to for guidance. “These programs transform students’ lives helping them set new goals for college and careers, and parents learn to support the skills and work habits to get there. We hope this model of using summer school to advance students rather than remediate them will be adopted by schools in the region,” said Carrol Moran,, Executive Director of the UC Santa Cruz Educational Partnership Center.

For more information about the Academy at Pajaro Valley High School, contact JACOB MARTINEZ at (831) 212-1562 or NORMA NICHOLS at (831) 212-1568. For more information about the Academy at Soledad High School, contact MARIA LEYVA at (831) 212-1788.

### **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 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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