

UC SANTA BARBARA

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UCSB STUDENTS ACCEPT THE AMERICA READS CHALLENGE

More than 200 University of California, Santa Barbara students applied to become trained reading tutors for Santa Barbara area elementary school children last fall in response to President Clinton's appeal to federal work-study students to help every child read well.

About 100 UCSB

students, who were chosen for their interest in children and tutoring capabilities, received training in reading diagnosis and instruction by the South Coast Writing Project (SCWriP) at UCSB. By the end of fall quarter, the hand-selected trainees had spent 4239 hours tutoring in nine Goleta schools and four Santa Barbara schools.

"It's really been an excellent experience for me because I am very interested in the problem of literacy in the United States," said UCSB English major Jaime Jarvis, who is tutoring second graders at Kellogg School in Goleta and plans to join the Peace Corps after she graduates. "It's exciting to see the children make vast improvements in reading and writing, and Anita Cruse, their teacher, has really made me feel welcome."

"Many of our tutors have said that this is the most meaningful work they have ever done," said Dennis Naiman, UCSB's coordinator for the America Reads program, whose position has been funded through SCWriP, the Chancellor's office, and the

Graduate School of Education. "We've had a great response from UCSB students, and wish we could place them all. The demand is certainly there."

"My favorite experience as a tutor has been working with a fifth grader named Erica, who was transitioning into English. She was so proud of her first book creation that she became excited about doing a million other projects. It opened her up so much," said Ramona Carter, who tutors at La Patera school in Goleta, and also hopes to join the Peace Corps after she graduates.

"Our biggest problem is transportation. Most of the tutors must rely on public transportation to get to the elementary schools. Some of them have spent more time on the bus trying to get to a school than actually tutoring," observed Naiman. "We've tried to place them as close to where they live as possible. That's why most of the tutors are in Goleta schools."

SCWRiP provided funding for trainers and administrative assistance for tutoring, as well as a stipend for a researcher from the campus's Graduate School of Education to document the success of the program.

Work-study students received information on the America Reads Challenge in their financial aid package last summer. The students have committed to work as tutors for one full year of service.

SCWRiP, the site of the California Writing Project and the National Writing Project Network, is a professional development program for elementary school through university-level teachers of writing at UCSB.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.