

UC SANTA BARBARA

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## **UCSB RESEARCHER INSTRUMENTAL IN OBTAINING \$3.8 MILLION TO IMPROVE KIDS' CHANCES**

Hueneme High School Is One of UCSB's Partnership Schools

UC Santa Barbara education researcher Katherine Larson took the bumper sticker phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" literally in her winning proposal to improve academic achievement in south Oxnard, Calif. schools---an area that has a greater incidence of school problems such as drug use and assaults than the state average and a community that has a high rate of domestic violence.

Larson's proposal for the Expanding Horizons Community Learning Center Project---an extensive after-school program that nurtures the entire family---received a total of \$3.8 million from federal, state, and local agencies to raise academic achievement to or above state averages and reduce substance abuse and school and community violence in south Oxnard schools. The bulk of the funding is a \$2.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center award---one of 176 grants given out of nearly 2500 applications nationwide.

"It's a very challenging goal," admits Larson, project director and a Ventura resident who has conducted numerous studies on improving success rates for high-risk students. "The schools in the project are between the 20th and 30th percentile

ranking for academic achievement in the state---it will take every ounce of expertise we can muster to reach the state's average.

Her innovative proposal includes:

Keeping Hueneme High School and feeder schools--Haydock Middle, McKinna Elementary and Kamala Elementary--open until 6 p.m. on school days for academic, cultural arts, and technical training programs. Activities are also planned for weekends, school holidays, and summer months.

Classes on parenting skills and English and computer literacy three nights a week for parents and grandparents. Spanish translation will be provided. Monthly community dinners and family nights in reading, mathematics, and science are also planned.

Volunteer work for students beginning in the fifth grade to learn community service skills, raise their self-esteem, and become a participating member of their community.

Provisions for child care and transportation to ensure that parents and students who share responsibilities for younger siblings can participate.

Community health care through a visiting mobile medical unit at learning center sites.

Tutoring for students in groups of four or less after school daily in an intensive academic remedial program.

Artists, theater and dance companies, musicians, and scientists will share their expertise in workshops. Additional programs include athletics, cooking, magazine writing, and computer literacy.

Counseling for greater family communication, substance abuse, anger management skills, and leadership training.

"The project is designed to benefit the whole child by building skills academically and for personal and social development," said Larson.

"Larson's project is a wonderful example of the types of collaboration UCSB is building," said Tom Ostwald, director of the UCSB School-Centered Partnerships.

The project's partners are UCSB, Oxnard School District, Oxnard High School District, and about 20 Oxnard community service organizations.

UCSB's Partnership Programs are part of the University of California systemwide outreach efforts to improve opportunities for California students in disadvantaged circumstances and to have a student body at UC campuses that reflects the diversity of California's population.

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## **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.