

THE Current

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[Andrea Estrada](#)

STEM Grant Supports Partnership Between UCSB and Oxnard College to Increase Education Opportunities in Math and Science

With a \$6 million award from the U.S. Department of Education's Science Technology Engineering Mathematics grant program for Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI-STEM), UC Santa Barbara and Oxnard College are partnering to create additional education opportunities in mathematics, science, and technology for students in the Oxnard Elementary and Oxnard Union High School districts.

The goal of the partnership, which is supported by the grant for a period of five years, is to prepare and motivate students to pursue bachelor's degree programs in STEM fields. The partners will implement innovative STEM programs for Hispanic and other underrepresented students in Oxnard schools and at Oxnard College.

To be classified as a Hispanic-serving institution, a university or college must, over a specified time period, serve a student body that is at least 25 percent Hispanic. Of the total number of students at Oxnard College, 61 percent are Hispanic. UCSB is now an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution, with close to 24 percent enrollment for the current academic year.

According to Gene Lucas, UCSB executive vice chancellor and the campus's principal investigator for the HSI-STEM initiative, the partnership is made possible through the Title V HSI-STEM federal funding. "It will allow us to continue to strengthen our outreach and academic preparation efforts to draw more Hispanic students and others to careers in science and engineering fields, and to prepare them for degree programs at UC Santa Barbara or other institutions of higher education," he said.

Reflecting on the long-term impacts of the HSI-STEM grant, UCSB Office of Education Partnership Director Claudia Martinez noted, "Hispanic students are succeeding in higher education and making a mark within STEM industries. Significant increases in college degree attainment for our region's Hispanic students is not only vital to our state's economic future, but is a key strategy for meeting President Obama's stated goal that, by 2020, the United States will have the highest college graduation records in the world."

The current HSI-STEM grant is a continuation an initial two-year Department of Education grant that made a significant impact on recruiting Oxnard students to STEM fields. UCSB's Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) program also contributed by increasing the participation of Oxnard-area junior high and high school students in STEM programs.

Overall, MESA serves more than 20,000 K-12, community college, and four-year college students each year. The program prepares students academically so they graduate with baccalaureate degrees in math-related disciplines. A total of 70 percent of MESA high school graduates pursue college degrees. In comparison, 48 percent of all California high school graduates go to college.

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† Top image: MESA students from Oxnard School District participated in a buckyball workshop at the Oxnard STEM Expo last September.

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