

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Achieve UC and Higher Education Week Encourage Area High School Students to Follow Their Dreams

Each of you has a dream for the future -- for your future. We're all here because we want to help you achieve that dream.

So said UC Santa Barbara Chancellor Henry T. Yang as he addressed an audience of more than 700 students at Dos Pueblos High School on Thursday, Oct. 18. He was one of several speakers participating in Achieve UC, a University of California initiative designed to show students across the state that higher education is within their reach. Other speakers included California State Assemblyman Das Williams and Santa Barbara School District Superintendent David Cash.

Among the audience were students from Dos Pueblos, Santa Barbara, and San Marcos High Schools; Alta Vista Alternative High School; and La Cuesta Continuation High School. They heard a lot about dreams over the course of the morning, and about opportunities, and about bright futures rooted in higher education.

"The main reason we're having an event like Achieve UC is to get students excited about the systems of higher education, and in UC in particular," said Mario Castellanos, acting director of UCSB's Office of Educational Partnerships and director of the campus's Math, Science, and Engineering Achievement (MESA) program. "A lot of the programs we do within the community get high school students interested

in college, but they don't always know how to navigate the system."

In addition to the main speakers, students heard from UCSB experts who armed them with information regarding UC admission, financial aid, and academic preparation. They also listened to a panel of UCSB undergraduate students who addressed topics related to campus organizations, employment, and internships; academic resources; university life; and how to pay for college.

For Dos Pueblos seniors Noely Gutierrez and Iris Ramirez, both of whom will be first-generation college students, Achieve UC is a tremendous resource. "I'm interested in financial aid and scholarships," said Ramirez, who plans to major in business. "I'm worried about that. I want to get information on what will help me to be successful and get a good education without having to stress about all the costs."

Gutierrez, who hopes to major in biology at UC Davis and then study veterinary medicine, is interested in financial aid, but she also wants to learn about what different UC campuses offer.

While UC Achieve focused attention on the University of California system, a Higher Education Week event at Santa Barbara High School highlighted the full range of higher education opportunities. Approximately 250 seniors were on hand to meet with representatives from UC, Cal State, and community college systems, as well as from private colleges and universities.

A four-day event sponsored by UCSB's Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), Higher Education Week brings presentations, college fairs, and breakout sessions to high schools in the Santa Maria, Lompoc, Santa Barbara, Carpinteria, Oxnard, and Fillmore school districts. The first event took place at Lompoc High School, and the week will conclude with visits to Pacifica, Rio Mesa, and Fillmore High Schools.

"The purpose of Higher Education Week is to open the doors of opportunity in terms of higher education for all students," said Britt Ortiz, EAOP director. "Usually, we have the situation where the college prep students are getting a lot of information -- they know the process, they go to the college center a lot. But there's also the other 70 percent who are usually community college-eligible, or have some interest in

college, but haven't pursued it."

According to Ortiz, Higher Education Week has proved most effective in reaching students who have not prepared themselves for college. "Those students are the ones this program inspires and motivates and helps to consider higher education as an option," he said. "They can start at the community college level, move into a four-year system if they want to, or pursue a technical education program."

A second Higher Education Week, geared toward high school juniors, will take place in the spring.

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