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Future Me

With the COVID-19 pandemic derailing its in-person leadership conference for students in area high schools, the Early Academic Outreach Program at UC Santa Barbara has created a new event to fill the void.

The “Future Me Series: Career Exploration & Professional Possibilities” brings together academic departments and faculty and staff members across the UC system and from other universities and colleges. Over four consecutive weeks, participants will dive into career opportunities four distinct areas: brain science, health, sustainability and education.

“When we finally determined we were not going to be able to host one of our large-scale annual conferences, the team brainstormed a virtual approach to sharing about career exploration,” said EAOP Director Britt Ortiz. “The team came up with the ‘Future Me Series’ to look at the possibilities and what you can do with almost any major.”

The series, which will be presented virtually, begins Thursday, April 22, and concludes Thursday, May 13.

“One of the silver linings of remote and virtual learning is that we can now connect with so many more students all at once,” Ortiz noted. “We are promoting this series statewide with dozens of high schools because we are collaborating with our other UC sister EAOP programs and numerous community-based organizations as well as state and federal pre-college partners.”

Individual events will begin with a brief overview of that week's area of exploration followed by a panel discussion featuring faculty members and graduate and undergraduate students, many of whom were the first in their families to attend college, who will discuss their academic journeys. Participants also will be invited to take part in a question-and-answer session with the panelists.

Events will conclude with a review of the digital packet EAOP will prepare for each participant that contains career-based resources, including links to the UC, California State and community college systems and to food security basic needs assistance such as CalFresh.

Each webinar will be recorded for future viewing.

"We are super excited about this opportunity to help high school students across the state learn more about these four areas of study and the numerous careers that are, in some cases, exploding with employment possibilities," said Ortiz.

"We also wanted to help first-generation students understand that an academic major is a stepping-off point and they can use it for much more than just one career track or field of employment," he continued. "Our goal is to help first-generation students understand how flexible a college degree can be in relation to their 'future me' aspirations."

Ortiz noted the personal stories of individuals who majored in areas of study and then took career paths that led them in directions other than they expected. "The engineer who became a member of the U.S. Congress, or an Iberian studies major who became deputy director of human resources for Los Angeles County are just a couple of examples," he said. "Imagining the 'future me' has no limits when you understand how to reach for the stars."

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.