



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

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MESA Program Lauded for helping Latino Students Soar

SANTA ANA, CA –At Santa Ana College, a state-wide program that has been lauded as a national community college model for Latino achievement has approximately 125 students enrolled; on February, 27 new students will join the program, replacing approximately the same number who are transferring to four-year schools.

California's MESA program (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement) supports educationally disadvantaged students to help them succeed in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) studies, and attain baccalaureate degrees in math-based majors.

Excelencia in Education recently named MESA as a semifinalist winner in its 2008 *Examples of Excelencia*. Excelencia in Education, a national program, identifies programs and departments that boost Latino enrollment, performance and graduation in higher education.

For three years Yolanda Mugica has served as the director/counselor of the MESA program at Santa Ana College. "We promote the MESA program in our presentations on high school campuses, in entry-level STEM classes at SAC and in

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counseling classes designed to help students identify their talents, interests and career choices,” she explained.

Mugica believes the MESA program increases transfer success by helping students overcome educational inadequacies and insecurities they may have about their ability to succeed in STEM studies, and by helping them identify more satisfying and higher-paying career choices related to their interests and their studies.

“For example, when a student says ‘I want a career in television,’ we may suggest ‘Well, why don’t you become a meteorologist instead? Then you can forecast the weather as well as present it on television, and you’ll make a lot more money!’ The MESA program helps raise students’ awareness of the bigger picture, the better possibilities, and then helps provide the educational tools and the support they need to succeed!”

That support includes a comfortable, well-equipped study center located in the counseling department in the administration building, where like-minded students collaborate and support each other in a nurturing environment. “It’s a virtual incubator for STEM majors where they also are encouraged to complete their homework before they leave campus for work and other obligations,” Mugica said.

“This year students in our MESA program received more than \$95,000 in scholarships, which students desperately need to help pay for high-priced math and science books,” she added.

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Enrollment at Santa Ana College represents about 4.8 percent of approximately 2,600 students enrolled in MESA programs, which are offered on 31 California community college campuses. According to the MESA Statewide Office, the program, administered by the University of California, is heavily supported by industry and has been replicated in more than a dozen other states.

As a semifinalist in the 2008 Examples of Excelencia, MESA will be included in the 2008 edition of the “What Works for Latino Students: Examples of Excelencia” compendium. The compendium will be distributed to over 13,000 Excelencia constituents, including educational organizations and policy leaders across the country. MESA also will be part of Excelencia’s national campaign to promote the use of effective institutional practices that demonstrate real evidence of supporting greater numbers of Latino students to earn higher education degrees.

For more information on the MESA program at Santa Ana College, please contact Director Yolanda Mugica at (714) 564-6373.

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About the Rancho Santiago Community College District

Santa Ana College is a community college, part of the Rancho Santiago Community College District. The mission of the Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD) is to respond to the educational needs of an ever-changing community and to provide programs and services that reflect academic excellence. Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College are public community colleges of RSCCD, which serve the residents of Anaheim Hills, East Garden Grove, Irvine, Orange, Santa Ana, Tustin and Villa Park. Both colleges provide education for academic transfer and careers, courses for personal and professional development, customized training for business and industry, and programs to train nurses, firefighters and law enforcement personnel.