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UCSB's Gevirtz Research Center Expands Mentorship Program

A \$250,000 pledge to UC Santa Barbara's Gevirtz Research Center from Paul Orfalea and Kinko's, Inc. will jumpstart an academic mentorship program in Ventura County schools.

Patterned after the Gevirtz Research Center's program in Santa Barbara schools, the Ventura program will begin this fall. The unique, school-based program matches volunteer mentors with students according to their shared interests in a hobby, pastime or career path. The mentors are recruited from local businesses, community organizations, local colleges, and universities. The program's goal is to provide support and guidance for average-performing upper elementary school students to improve their aspirations, motivations, skills and eventually their success in high school and college.

"The mentoring program through UCSB's Gevirtz Research Center is making a measurable difference in children's lives," says Kinko's, Inc. chairperson and founder Orfalea. "It gives me great pleasure for Kinko's to bring this program to Ventura students, where our corporate headquarters are. This initiative is not just about education, it's about children's self esteem, their hopes, and their futures."

Peabody Charter, Washington Elementary, and Franklin Elementary were the pilot schools in the Santa Barbara program, which targeted fifth-grade students. By the end of the third year of the Santa Barbara program, participating students were

more likely to have achieved a 3.0 grade-point average than the comparison group of students in seventh grade, according to an evaluation of the program conducted by UCSB Graduate School of Education researchers Russell Rumberger and Mary Brenner. The researchers also found that those students were less likely to have suspensions from schools.

"More importantly, the students developed more professional career aspirations, had improved self-esteem, and had more positive attitudes toward school," said Rumberger, UCSB professor of education and director of the University of California's Linguistic Minority Research Institute.

"Part of the center's goal is to share the information gained through such successful programs and to expand these activities into other school districts regionally and beyond," said Vishna Herrity, director of the Gevirtz Research Center.

Interested volunteers may call the Gevirtz Research Center at 893-7905.

The Gevirtz Research Center Committed to Outreach for Educational Excellence, is a unique university/K-12 partnership that develops innovative educational programs based on the latest research, implements them in local schools, then researches their impact on student achievement. The center is housed in UCSB's Graduate School of Education. Its website is <http://education.ucsb.edu/grc/>.

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.