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Engaging families early to demystify the college preparation process

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Aiming to provide parents the opportunity to learn about different aspects of accessing higher education, the UC Santa Barbara Early Academic Outreach Program will host a special event for families. Parents and students of all ages from the program's partnership schools are invited to the EAOP Parent Conference Saturday, May 20, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the university campus.

The event is specially geared towards first-generation college-going families from Santa Maria High School, Ernest Righetti High School, Pioneer Valley High School, Rio Mesa High School, Pacifica High School, Channel Islands High School, Santa Paula High School, Hueneme High School and South High School, as well as Ventura High School, Dos Pueblos High School and Harding University Partnership School.

"In the early outreach world, we know how critical parent involvement is for first generation students considering higher education. It really can and does make the difference," said Britt Ortiz, director of EAOP. "This type of family engagement conference is foundational for first-gen families and setting their aspirations, understanding and preparedness for the higher education path going forward. We

say you can never start preparing too early! We know that parents need to learn about financial aid, the A-G college prep requirements, and the four systems of higher education in California in order to help their children stay on track and understand the opportunities before them, and how preparing in middle and high school is so critical for getting into college after high school.”

All students and parents will attend a student panel and participate in a campus tour. Also offered: parent/student workshops on financial literacy, financial aid myths, the four systems of education and the transition from high school to college. Workshops tailored to high school and middle school students will focus on financial aid, majors vs. careers, college knowledge and the transition to college with financial aid. All workshops and the tour will be offered in both English and Spanish.

For the younger participants, there will be activities including 3-D puzzle painting, a paper tower competition, Physics Circus demonstrations, chalk mat, STEM kits and a slime party. “This will allow their parents to attend their workshops and focus on the presentation and materials we are providing them throughout the day,” Ortiz said. “This is a family engagement conference.”

“We want to demystify the college preparation process for as many first-generation parents as possible,” he added. “We want the participating families to know and understand that college preparation is a family effort and that the more they understand about the process, the more likely their students are able to participate in the college readiness opportunities in junior high and high school.”

Parent services are an important component of the EAOP service model, noted Associate Director Rosa Martinez.

“Our goal is to have parents walk away with confidence on how to support their students' higher education journey as well as the basics on the four types of financial available to pay for their post-secondary education,” she said.

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