

UCSB Office of Campus Outreach Initiatives
Evaluation Case Study 2003

Santa Paula High School

UCSB Partership School

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Conducted with the support of the
UCSB Chancellor's Outreach Advisory Board (COAB)
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Introduction

The Santa Paula partnership located in Ventura County primarily includes one comprehensive high school, Santa Paula High, and its feeder Isbell Middle School (although some elementary schools in the surrounding rural districts of Santa Paula also participate in UCSB outreach). Nestled among oceanside farmlands approximately 40 miles southeast of the city of Santa Barbara, Santa Paula High School's student population (a total of about 1,600 students) includes a large majority of Latino students (over 80% within the high school), many of whom are English Language Learners (about 15%), are socioeconomically disadvantaged (more than 50%), and who have parents who are migrant farm workers.

The additional descriptive data presented below demonstrate other challenges and strengths to which Santa Paula High School (SPHS) and UCSB Outreach must dedicate their resources to support student achievement.

Standardized Testing Data

Since 1997, California has required schools to participate in the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program as a measure of their students' achievement. One new component of the STAR is the *California Achievement Tests, Sixth Edition (CAT/6)*, which replaced the *Stanford Achievement Test, Ninth Edition (SAT-9)* in 2003 as the mandatory norm-referenced test. Since the SAT-9 and the CAT/6 are published by two different companies, were developed at different times, and use different national groups of students for comparisons, no direct comparisons between the 2002 SAT-9 scores and the 2003 CAT/6 scores can be made.

Instead, the following table provides comparative data on the percentage of students who scored at or above the 50th national percentile rank (NPR) on the 2003 CAT/6 at Santa Paula High School (SPHS) compared to students in Ventura County (VC) and students statewide (CA).

Santa Paula High School 2003												
CAT/6 % Scoring At or Above 50 th Percentile and Comparisons with County and State												
Grade	Reading			Language			Mathematics			Science		
	SPHS	VC	CA	SPHS	VC	CA	SPHS	VC	CA	SPHS	VC	CA
9	41	57	50	41	55	49	42	52	46	36	54	47
10	39	55	49	40	54	49	37	55	52	32	52	47
11	40	50	47	41	50	47	30	48	47	30	52	49

These data indicate that more students within Ventura County score above the national average on the CAT/6 across all grade levels and content areas. From four to nineteen percent fewer students in Santa Paula High School, however, score at or above the 50th percentile compared to statewide scores across all content areas. Scores are particularly lower for SPHS students in the upper grade (10-11th) mathematics and science content areas.

Another component of the STAR Program is the California Standards Tests (CST), developed specifically to assess students' performance on California's Academic Content Standards. The standards tests measure achievement in

Santa Paula High School's student population (about 1,600 students) includes a large majority of Latino students (over 80%), many of whom are English Language Learners (about 15%) and are socioeconomically disadvantaged (over 50%).

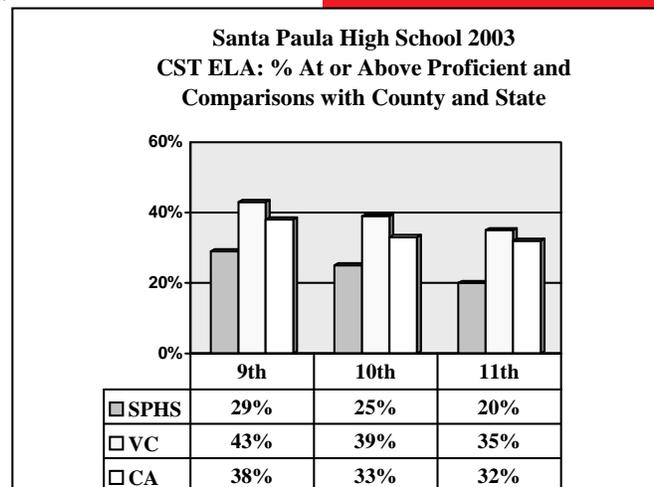
SPHS students show lower percentile scores than county-wide or statewide rankings across all content areas.

English Language Arts, Mathematics (e.g., Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II tests), History-Social Science (e.g., World History, U.S. History), and Science (e.g., Biology, Chemistry, Physics) content areas at the appropriate grade levels. For example, only high school students who were enrolled in or completed a standards-based Chemistry course took the Chemistry test. All high school students in grades 9-11, though, are required to take the English Language Arts (ELA) tests. Therefore, the graph below shows the percentage of SPHS students who scored at or above the proficient level on the ELA tests compared to county and statewide scores.

SPHS students' ELA standards tests show lower proficiency levels than county-wide or statewide levels.

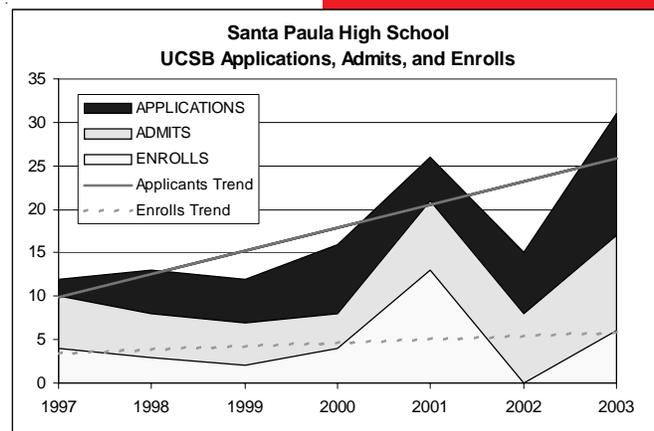
These data indicate that more students within Ventura County score at or above the proficient level in English Language Arts than statewide across all grade levels, but SPHS students fall far short of the statewide or county levels.

On the Academic Performance Index (API) scale of 200 to 1000, Santa Paula High School's 2002 Base API was **565**, and their 2003 Growth API was **585** (an increase of 20 points). SPHS successfully met their 5% school-wide improvement goal (including improvement for Hispanic students and students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged), but they did *not* meet their growth target for White (non-Hispanic) students. Currently, Santa Paula High School's statewide decile rank is a **3**.



UCSB Admission Data

The graph at the right illustrates the comparative numbers of Santa Paula High School students who have applied to, been admitted to, and enrolled in UCSB from 1997-2003. Trend lines indicate that rates were on a steady increase until 2002, when the school suffered a sharp decline in applicant numbers *as well as the absence of a UCSB site coordinator*. Overall, however, SPHS's admission rate to UCSB (ranging from 50-81%) has been consistently higher than the overall UCSB Freshman admission rate, which generally falls around 50% of applicants.



SPHS enjoyed a steady increase in UCSB application and admission rates until 2002, a year that also saw the absence of the UCSB site coordinator.

In general, the descriptive data presented above demonstrate high socioeconomic risk factors, historically low standardized testing performances, and low UC enrollment rates for SPHS students. Despite these challenges, UCSB Outreach, in partnership with the Santa Paula High School community, has witnessed recent gains in UCSB applications and admissions from SPHS. What has contributed to these rebounds in performance—and what more can be done to continue these positive trends—are the focal points of the interviews conducted with Santa Paula High School teachers, counselors, administrators, and students as described in the following case study.

Interviews were conducted with 5 Santa Paula High School students, 8 teachers, the Principal, the Superintendent, and 3 counselors.

The Santa Paula Partnership has participated in many outreach activities ranging from teachers' articulation meetings and professional development institutes to students' test preparation workshops and college advisement.

Methodology

To share the perspectives of the Santa Paula elementary and high school districts' students, teachers, and administrators regarding UCSB Outreach programs, interviews were conducted by the Evaluation Coordinator of Campus Outreach Initiatives in Spring, 2003. Interview participants included:

- 5 high school students (including four seniors and one junior)
- 2 high school administrators (the Principal and Superintendent)
- 2 high school counselors
- 1 high school career center technician
- 5 high school teachers (including English, Mathematics, and Social Science content areas)
- 3 middle school teachers (including Mathematics and Special Education content areas)

The semi-structured interview protocol included questions about the breadth and adequacy of the UCSB Outreach Programs, the nature of the school-university partnership, outcomes associated with outreach, and goals/expectations for future outreach activities. Overall, the participants shared some unique perspectives about the context of outreach, but recurring themes and issues emerged from the interviews that offer insight into the character of the Santa Paula partnership, personal experience with outreach activities, and ongoing support for continued collaboration. These trends are described and discussed below.

Findings

How UCSB Outreach Meets Santa Paula High School's Needs

Over the last academic year, students, teachers, counselors, and administrators from Santa Paula High School and their feeder district, Santa Paula Elementary, have taken advantage of the many resources UCSB Outreach programs have offered. For example, UCSB School-University Partnerships (SUP), Early Academic Outreach (EAO), Office of Campus Outreach Initiatives, the four UCSB California Subject Matter Projects, and Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) sponsored multiple SPHS and Isbell Middle School outreach activities during 2002-2003, including:

- After-school articulation meetings with the high school and feeder middle school teachers across various departments;
- Specialized departmental meetings and on-going professional development opportunities such as: the UCSB Academic Writing Partnership (including the Diagnostic Writing Service), the IIMPac Project (implemented by the South Coast Writing Project), California History-Social Science Program institutes and articulation days, Project RENEW (leadership and support for novice teachers of mathematics), Algebra Institutes (sponsored by the Tri-Counties Mathematics Project), the LUCI Mathematics Institute (LAUSD/UCLA

Collaborative Institutes in Mathematics); and other California Subject Matter Project events and activities;

- Partnership schools Principal Meetings hosted at UCSB for dialogue and feedback among administrator colleagues;
- Guest presentations, conferences, and celebrations such as Ed Trust-West's "Raising Student Achievement" Spring 2003 conference, the "UC Success Night" honoring all SPHS students admitted to the University of California, the MESA Awards Banquet, and the UCSB Ambassadors Dinner honoring current UCSB undergraduates from partnership schools;
- Academic development opportunities including workshops, classroom presentations, advisement, and test preparation by EAO's Stuart Levine and Kathy Stiles (EAO Academic Counselors) and MESA's Oralia Razo (MESA Coordinator) and Nick Rodriguez (MESA Advisor and SPHS mathematics teacher);
- UCSB academic-centered campus visits and MESA campus events (including MESA Prelims and Final Competitions);
- An outreach site coordinator, Maria "Concha" Soto, to supply college counseling, guidance, application support, classroom presentations, and coordination for academic enrichment activities;
- An outreach SPHS teacher liaison, Margaret Booker (teacher of social science and drivers' education), to assist with and coordinate professional development activities across departments;
- Participation in Student Initiated Outreach Programs such as El Congreso and Los Ingenieros.

Educators' and students' perspectives about the impact and effectiveness of these UCSB events and activities are delineated below.

Test Preparation and Academic Support

When Santa Paula High School students were asked to describe the value and impact of the outreach activities in which they participated, they immediately recognized the helpful support, information, and motivation provided by multiple UCSB academic counselors on their high school campus. These staff included EAO's Concha Soto, SPHS Site Coordinator, Stuart Levine and Kathy Stiles, EAO Test Preparation advisors, and Oralia Razo, MESA Coordinator. Particularly in the Fall, during college application time, the students said they took advantage of the Saturday morning workshops offered by EAO and MESA's support to assist with UC application completion. In addition, the students described the SAT preparation workshops offered by Stuart Levine and Kathy Stiles as especially helpful in showing them the strategies to be most successful on the test, including, "What to do and what not to do." By participating in the test preparation activities and experiencing multiple administrations of practice tests, one student affirmed that he understood the SAT format better, how the test worked, and what kinds of questions it would include. This familiarity made him more comfortable with the test in general and helped him to improve his performance.

Other educators and administrators also applauded the work of the EAO counselors, endorsing their work to develop curriculum and mini-lessons for

Santa Paula students and educators participated in a wide range of UCSB Outreach activities throughout the 2002-2003 academic year.

SAT test preparation and assistance with college applications were the first things mentioned by SPHS students as helpful UCSB Outreach offerings.

Due in part to the contributions of UCSB's academic enrichment opportunities, more SPHS students score high on the Golden State Exams, the standardized achievement tests (SAT-9/CAT-6), and the California High School Exit Exam.

SPHS administrators and counselors recommended more devotion to test preparation and tutoring to assist students in raising their achievement test scores.

SAT test preparation. Of Kathy Stiles, one administrator was particularly appreciative for her responsiveness and follow-through: "She did an outstanding job. I don't have enough to say about her. Almost everything we talked about, she came through... It was like having my own curriculum consultant!" And another acknowledged that the EAO counselors were always ready and enthusiastically willing to hold innovative SAT workshops even if a small number of students participated. One teacher also noted that EAO classroom demonstrations, offering students a view of different learning styles and study skills, were especially effective with her SDAIE students, who respond well to the use of visual aids and interactive curriculum.

As a result, an SPHS counselor asserted that test scores had indeed improved: "They are still low overall, but there were some [SAT scores] over 1,000. [The test prep sessions] are definitely helping... to teach the kids how to outsmart the test" and offering the students savvy test-taking techniques to improve their performances. Mr. Gaitan, SPHS Principal, also affirmed that more students, in fact, are taking the SAT. To support his school's academic enrichment efforts and to increase students' incentive to take the SAT tests, he has initiated a "Principal's Club," where students get a 50% discount on the cost of their prom ticket if they score over 1,000 on the SAT. Regarding other standardized test scores, Mr. Gaitan shared specifics about additional positive outcomes due to intensive test preparation and standards-based teaching: more SPHS students have been recognized for their scores on the Golden State Exams, they are closing the achievement gap on their SAT-9/CAT-6 state-mandated scores, and the school has successfully increased its API rating over the last five years. In addition, according to Mr. Gaitan, in the first administration of the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE) in 2002, about 45% of the juniors passed the ELA portion, and about 37% passed the Math portion. Last year, these passing rates increased to 65% on the ELA and about 45% on the Math portions.

While educators recognized these positive trends, they also acknowledged the continuing need for more intensive and on-going student academic support and test preparation. One high school counselor recommended that UCSB provide additional follow-up to their Fall SAT workshops. The counselor commented, "In the Fall, the SAT workshops were great! Concha was also instrumental in their coordination." Yet afterwards, he recognized that there was a large gap in time until EAO staff offered another round of workshops in May. Similarly, he believes the implementation of a CD-ROM test preparation program in the SPHS computer centers, supported by EAO in collaboration with the counseling staff, lacked sufficient follow-up. "It's a great tool, but we had technical problems. It didn't materialize." It appears that even though the CDs were purchased and uploaded for the students' use, technical difficulties were never addressed, so the program was left basically inoperable.

Although technical or logistical problems existed in some program implementation, the Santa Paula partnership recognized the critical role UCSB plays in providing their students academic assistance. Most individuals who participated in the interviews expressed their desire that the UCSB test prep efforts increase in frequency and intensity despite budget cutbacks. Santa Paula Union High School District Superintendent Bill Brand commented, "The

exit exam is a major weight on our heads. With our population, we need to commit to that.” He advised that a combination of both test preparation and tutoring would assist the students with these high stakes tests—as well as assist articulation efforts between the elementary and high school districts. Unanimously, the educators recognized these efforts as their highest priority need to address with their high school students.

Santa Paula High School Site Coordinator Services

As the Santa Paula Site Coordinator, Concha Soto works to coordinate and integrate UCSB outreach efforts and pre-college services into the fabric of the high school campus. She dedicates individualized attention to students needs (by reviewing student transcripts, for example, to provide individualized academic planning and to determine eligibility status) and to on-going family engagement (through consistent communication and parent education events). Most importantly, in her role as site coordinator, Concha works to facilitate the formation of a college-going culture at the school site over time through strong ties with the administration, student body, and community.

When SPHS students were asked about their contact with the SPHS site coordinator, the students affirmed that she gave them advice, helped them to calculate their GPAs for college admissions, and explained the college application process in an instructive and friendly manner. “She called everyone in one by one,” they said, and “she always had an open door whenever we needed help or to talk.” Concha gave them individualized information about which courses to take, the universities that offered programs suited to their interests, and about careers in general. “She also helped out a lot with scholarships,” they added, describing how scholarship information is provided in the Career Center, but usually “only a few students are informed about it and only then at the last minute.”

When asked how Concha assisted the students in their selection of courses, one SPHS student described how she was very interested in engineering. So Concha informed her that she would need to take Calculus, guiding her to a suitable course offered at Ventura College. Other students attested to the fact that Concha encouraged them to take additional community college courses relevant to their interests and intended college majors, such as Chicano Studies, Psychology, and Racial/Ethnic Studies. In fact, Concha was also able to get the students reimbursements for their books and fees at Ventura College—something they believe they “never would have received without her assistance.” In addition, the student credited Concha with helping them to access and communicate with the universities during their application period—“She always has their emails and phone numbers,” they attested.

The SPHS counselors also acknowledged the work of Concha Soto: “She was instrumental in the SAT workshops in the Fall, and those were very successful,” the lead counselor confirmed. They also recognized that Concha provided the students with support services that they, as high school counselors, often did not have time to perform (since they are most often dealing with academic and discipline issues). For example, Concha reviewed student transcripts and instructed the students on what grades counted for UC/CSU

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-- SPHS Student**

“Overall, [UCSB outreach] is a wonderful program. We just miss the site coordinator.”

-- SPHS Counselor

“[The site coordinators are] so important. They build connections with kids. The kids get used to seeing them. When they’re not here, [the students] ask, ‘Where do I go now?’”

-- SPHS Principal

admissions, how the college preparatory course grades were calculated into the GPA, and assisted the students with completion of their college and financial aid applications. Another counselor recognized how Concha was also helpful in preparing the ROP (vocational) courses for UC elective approval, which he believes “helps to get students motivated. Success in that one class might be the trigger to motivate them” beyond vocational courses to full college prep sequences.

The *only* drawback to the site coordinator model at SPHS—recognized by the counselors as well as most interviewed individuals alike—was the absence of Concha for much of the school year due to a serious illness. Most staff referred sadly to her absence as a loss of momentum and consistency.

Reflecting on the work of the previous site coordinator whom Concha replaced in 2003, one counselor lamented, “He was here every day. If we could have *that* back, it would all be a lot more cohesive... Overall, [UCSB outreach] is a wonderful program. We just miss the site coordinator.” Another explained that the site coordinator’s ability to “get into classrooms is critical—building rapport with teachers and getting information out” at the proper time intervals to meet testing deadlines, for example, is crucial. Without the consistency of the site coordinator, many other individuals must try to fill the void created in these student-centered services, and inevitably some gaps remain.

When asked about his perspective of the impact of the site coordinator (and knowing the context of her absence due to medical leave), Principal Gaitan reflected on the shifting history of the position on the SPHS campus. When he first met with the UCSB outreach directors, Mr. Gaitan agreed with them that a UCSB campus representative at the high school site would be a necessary and critical addition. Since then, he thinks that the partnership has shown the model to be quite effective, “but it’s not always easy to implement. There are things beyond our control,” such as site coordinators’ transfers to different positions or unexpected illnesses. Mr. Gaitan referred to the data indicating increased college admissions when there is a consistent presence of a site coordinator on the high school campus. “See what happens, when [site coordinators] are here! There are high numbers, follow-up, and kids go to UC. When they are not here, we work as a team. Someone tries to fill in, but it’s not the same.” While this year about 90 Santa Paula High School students applied to universities, and 36 were accepted to the University of California, Mr. Gaitan believes it is imperative for someone to fill a permanent role to encourage enrollment in four-year colleges, to answer students’ and parents’ questions about financial aid and housing, and to be there for the important follow-up work. “That person is *so important*,” he implored. “They build connections with the kids. The kids get used to seeing them. When they’re not here, they ask, ‘Where do I go now?’” Inconsistency in this critical position places the burden on the school to adapt their existing counseling program to meet the college information needs of their students.

Due to the valuable, indispensable, and unique role that the site coordinators play on campus, Mr. Gaitan strongly recommended that the model must have a responsive *back-up system* in place for on-going guidance and reliability if and when a permanent position cannot be filled. He suggested that perhaps a student could train under each site coordinator in case unforeseen

circumstances occur. If not, “you won’t see the results of all of your work,” he admonished. Most of those interviewed concurred, referring to the essential need for consistency in the site coordinator position to achieve school-wide dedication to academic excellence and postsecondary education aspirations for all students and their families.

The MESA Program in Santa Paula

This year, the Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) program offered services to Santa Paula High School as well as its feeder Isbell Middle School. The MESA program goals and objectives include (but are not limited to): (1) promoting interest and awareness in math, engineering, and science subjects and careers; (2) increasing college awareness; (3) increasing student confidence, communication skills, leadership, and self initiative; and (4) increasing PSAT/SAT and other standardized test scores, student grades, family educational standards, and UC eligibility and application rates.

Almost all of the educators and each and every student interviewed were well aware of the activities and events sponsored by the MESA program in Santa Paula. When asked to describe the program, one high school counselor recognized the good work of Nick Rodriguez as the MESA advisor (and mathematics teacher at SPHS) as well as the benefits of having a “popular, academic-based club on campus—one that goes beyond the social or community-service aspects” on which most clubs exclusively focus. High school principal Tony Gaitan also described the school’s efforts to build in a career pathway of engineering/technology in the school handbook of course selections to more fully integrate the MESA curriculum with other standards-based college prep courses. Currently, the MESA program is working to develop a curriculum to teach within a UC-certified (A-G approved) MESA class. He hopes that Mr. Rodriguez will be able to work with the counselors in enhancing this career pathway, and that as a result, SPHS will see more students graduating with math/engineering intended majors (Mr. Gaitan noted that seven students were accepted to the prestigious UC math and engineering programs this year). Mr. Gaitan also described Phyllis Brady, Bob Cota, and Oralia Razo, MESA director and coordinators from UCSB, as “great people,” and other SPHS staff echoed his sentiment, acknowledging MESA’s work in assisting with college faires, test preparation, academic enrichment opportunities, field trips, campus visits, and other outreach events.

When SPHS students were asked about whether they were involved in MESA, all of the students answered positively. “It’s one of the biggest clubs on campus! There are about 30-40 members,” they said. When queried about what they do and what the program offers, the students talked about their extracurricular involvement in competitions and club functions—which contributes to stronger college applications—as well as the college advice and support provided by Oralia Razo. “She’s here just about every Monday, and she’s always making up workshops” that correspond to the students’ questions and needs, they affirmed. In addition, one student recognized that the club “expands your level of thinking.” They are engaged in many activities in MESA from robotics to rocket engineering. They also have additional

The MESA program works to promote interests in math, science, and engineering and to increase college awareness and student skills.

“MESA expands my level of thinking.”
-- SPHS Student

“[MESA’s Oralia Razo] is great with the kids. A big help... She does so much, it’s hard to keep track of.”

**-- Nick Rodriguez,
SPHS MESA Advisory**

“I wasn’t even thinking about going to college. After MESA, that’s what I want to do.”

-- SPHS Student

opportunities to visit the UCSB campus for workshops and events. Furthermore, MESA provided many of them with the opportunity to go to a Leadership Camp in Fresno. While most of the students were unsure whether they would pursue math, science, or engineering careers in the future, MESA made the subjects seem “more fun” and less daunting.

Nick Rodriguez, SPHS MESA Advisor, attributes much of the program’s progress at SPHS to the commitment of the UCSB staff. “With what they have,” he stated, “they make a positive influence on the kids.” He also highly praised the assistance of Oralia Razo, describing her work to review transcripts, counsel the students toward college preparation, and present workshops on careers, study skills, and test preparation: “She’s great with the kids. A big help... She does so much, it’s hard to keep track of.”

Mr. Rodriguez confirmed that there had been a one-week training in the summer for all MESA advisors. While he felt that the training was sufficient to prepare him for his role, he does believe that the goals of MESA are quite ambitious and challenging. “Getting our kids to go to college is tough as it is. Then getting them to think about the tough engineering and sciences is another thing,” he said. When asked whether he thought the goal was too ambitious, Mr. Rodriguez said, “No, I think it’s really good to be overly ambitious. It’s just a big goal, and it’s very hard to get there.” When asked what UCSB might do to ensure that more students meet the goal, Mr. Rodriguez recommended that they develop a more structured MESA curriculum. While he has “binders full of ideas,” it would be helpful to have more explicit demonstrations of how to implement the ideas in structured club activities. He also described how he and Principal Gaitan have been in discussions about turning the MESA club into a full-fledged class (during the B period—or zero hour—before school). They both believe that the club needs a budgeted time in the school day, and that the students should receive credit for their involvement. Mr. Rodriguez also confirmed that he and Mr. Gaitan are discussing the career pathways model to include math, science, and engineering career trajectories for students interested in pursuing those kinds of college majors and careers.

In terms of student outcomes as a result of their MESA participation, Mr. Rodriguez reported that students had increased their overall positive attitudes about going to college, especially after their visits to campuses. “Just getting them at the university makes them feel more at home,” he said. “We need to get them to these big institutions, as much as we can, so the kids stop feeling intimidated.” Mr. Rodriguez also described how one of his seniors told him, “I wasn’t even thinking about going to college. After MESA, that’s what I want to do.” He also believes that the MESA project helps the students to take a different perspective. While tutoring and academic support are offered to SPHS students after school, most students do not show up for the assistance—but his MESA students are starting to realize the benefits and attend more frequently. They also were quite successful in their MESA competitions this year. The SPHS students competed in the speech contest, the math test, the balsa wood glider, the bridge, and the egg drop. At the MESA Prelims, SPHS MESA placed second in the speech contest and first in algebra. In addition, Mr. Rodriguez reflected on the recent end-of-the-year banquet that MESA hosted for participants. At the celebration, parents of the students expressed

how MESA affected their students. He said that parents were depicting how their children were now excited about math and science, how they think more about how things work, and how they have more positive attitudes about math and science classes.

Still, Mr. Rodriguez desires more guidance. “It’s so wide open,” he lamented. “Engineering is so wide open and deep. It’s difficult to find direction. It’s like they dropped us in the middle of the ocean and said, ‘Find land.’” He recommended that UCSB continue to emphasize field trips and practical experiences with the students involved in MESA and other outreach opportunities. “Get the kids *out there*. Our town is far enough to be isolated but big enough for kids to get in trouble. We’re far enough from a university, we don’t have a college in town,” he reflected. So he strongly encouraged that UCSB “find good opportunities to take the students out of town and see opportunities.” Similarly, he believes these opportunities would be very valuable for parents “to show them that it is a reality that their kids can go somewhere.” Mr. Rodriguez divulged that he was also an alumna of Santa Paula High School, and his parents, like his neighbors, work in the fields. “They come home and they are tired. Most parents only have a 3rd to 4th grade education, and they are stressed. They think, ‘What do I know about school?’” Mr. Rodriguez believes it is imperative for UCSB to realize that parents don’t feel a connection to the school, and they often feel intimidated. He benefited from his older brother’s role modeling, though, and the fact that his parents desired a better life for him. As a result, Mr. Rodriguez recommended that UCSB capitalize on the success of the Santa Paula students who have made it to the university—to bring them back to the community to share their experiences and lessons learned. Mr. Rodriguez also acknowledged that the presence of Oralia Razo and her fiancé, who are Santa Paula natives, strengthens the ties to the university. In addition, there are Ventura College representatives on campus to offer students “a second chance”—another pathway to the university through concurrent enrollment.

MESA Advisors and teachers at Isbell Middle School also shared their perspectives about the newly-launched MESA program with their 7th and 8th grade students. Arthur Lopez, Mathematics teacher and one of the MESA Advisors at Isbell, acknowledged that MESA is a new program in Santa Paula, and that they had “a late start, but a strong finish” this year that sustained the interests of the students. He believes that the excellent UCSB MESA staff, including Oralia Razo, Bob Cota, and Phyllis Brady, increased the student and teacher buy-in for the program. In addition, Mr. Lopez stated that the MESA program benefits from “solid activities aligned with the standards,” and that this “helps the administration to defend” these types of extracurricular efforts in the school. Similarly, Liz Davis, Math and Science teacher and the other MESA Advisor at Isbell, characterized MESA as “an awesome opportunity for the kids.”

Ms. Davis explained that Isbell has a brand new principal, and next year, he is discussing the idea of integrating MESA into the school’s regular curriculum. Ms. Davis is very excited at the prospect since “it’s hard to get the ‘good’ kids involved in after-school activities since many are involved in sports.” The MESA class may be offered as an elective for the 8th grade students, she said,

The SPHS MESA Advisor, Nick Rodriguez, recommended that UCSB capitalize on the success of the Santa Paula students who have made it to the university—and to bring them back to SPHS as role models.

“[MESA offers] solid activities aligned with the standards.”
-- Art Lopez, MESA Advisor at Isbell Middle School

Students in MESA from Isbell Middle School have visited the UCSB campus (multiple times) as well as Vandenberg Air Force Base and Point Mugu.

MESA students excelled in math and science competitions, reduced their classroom behavior problems, and increased in their self-confidence and school pride.

and Bob Cota has been in discussions with them about the curriculum. He is assisting the advisors in creating a class syllabus that will meet the approval of the district as a legitimate year-long science course.

Ms. Davis also described the other activities of MESA including field trips (“I can’t speak highly enough about it!”) and activities such as the balsa wood glider construction, the egg drop, rockets, straw towers, and the leg bridge building. Field trips have included visits to the UCSB campus (Isbell attended all events including Engineering Day, Rocket Launch, Parents/Family Day, and Prelims and Finals Competitions), Vandenberg Air Force Base, and Point Mugu. MESA also met twice weekly after school, and participation generally ranged from 20 to 40 students, although about 100 students in all participated at one point. “It was rocky at first,” she recalled. “We didn’t have a place to meet.” Ms. Davis said there was definitely a shortage of accommodations for the MESA club on campus, but she is optimistic that with the new principal’s support, they will find a good space for next year.

When asked whether they could attribute any student outcomes to participation in MESA, both Mr. Lopez and Ms. Davis reflected on the make-up of the participants this year. “It was an interesting mix of kids. Some were your typical honor roll types that took to it like a duck to water. At the outset, they were competitive and placed in events from the very start,” stated Mr. Lopez. But both advisors also noticed that they had students who were bright with many abilities, but who also had behavior problems— ‘but never, *ever* in MESA.’ According to many of these students’ teachers, the “kids really turned around” because of their participation, and they “put themselves on check” more in the classroom. Mr. Lopez believes this may be due to the fact that the students worked well with the hands-on orientation of the MESA projects. According to him, these ‘problem students’ established themselves within the club and knew the consequences to not behaving appropriately. As a result, he excitedly declared, they took first place in all the major categories of the MESA-wide competitions. “They even beat out the honor roll kids!” he said, documenting that the Isbell students received awards in the “longest flight,” the super science quiz, and for overall points. Ms. Davis also saw an increase in student competence and confidence levels, and she documented that the number of detentions that students received dropped as a result of their MESA involvement. Ms. Davis definitely believes that the students’ interests in math and science increased, and, after their great success at the MESA competitions, she thinks the students’ pride in their school and their own abilities also increased. Furthermore, Ms. Davis applauded the recent banquet hosted by MESA that included both high school and middle school students and their families as guests. “This is what the kids need,” she confirmed, “to see where they’re going.” Providing the role models for both the middle school students as well as the high school students (since current UCSB engineering undergraduates were also present) was powerful. In addition, the students’ experience of school spirit while witnessing the pride of other schools at MESA Finals was equally important and inspiring. “Some students just don’t see how they get from one point to another,” Ms. Davis explained. She encouraged the idea of more university students and staff coming to Isbell to speak regarding the benefits of MESA and the field of engineering.

While the teachers unanimously applauded the efforts of the new MESA program at their school, they did offer some excellent recommendations to improve and adapt the program to the needs of their community. For example, Mr. Lopez conceded that, “The [MESA] activities might cloud the merits of the program. It’s important not to sell it short.” He discussed his own recognition of the “incredible outreach and follow-through of the MESA program from middle school through high school,” but the fact that, “sometimes faculty and principals aren’t fully aware of the benefits.” He believes that eventually the administrators and faculty will realize its linkage with the community, its contribution to students’ progress, and its potential to demonstrate the “good things the school is doing,” yet Mr. Lopez also conceded that MESA coordinators have to “help them see this!” He suggested that the program make the effort to engage in more public relations events such as taking pictures and presenting plaques to the administrators. “Presentation is *everything*,” he implored. “Call attention to it and it will increase their appreciation. Right now, it’s competing with a lot of other issues.”

And despite the budget cuts, Ms. Davis would still like to see an increase in the opportunities to take students on field trips because, “getting the kids out of town is very important.” While she believes the school should be able to sustain projects suitable for MESA (“We can muddle through and get supplies”), she knows that only with the UCSB funding will their club be able to enjoy these excursions that take them off of campus. She also recommended additional visits to business and industry to allow the students to see math, science, and engineering “in action.” In addition, she would like to meet with other MESA advisors who have more experience with the program to gauge the extent of their roles and learn from their successes. Similarly, a special education teacher from Isbell recommended that MESA offer students like hers a “one-on-one buddy in the MESA project—someone to look up to, who can provide support and guidance.” This idea of utilizing role models for MESA advisors and students alike resounded across all of the interviews conducted in Santa Paula, as educators recognized the potential powerful impact and connection to the community that local examples of success can bring.

Teacher Professional Development

Unanimously and overwhelmingly, the teachers, administrators, and counselors of Santa Paula who participated in professional development activities—ranging from summer institutes to classroom demonstrations and conferences—endorsed and lauded the support of the various UCSB outreach programs sponsored by the School-University Partnerships (SUP) program and the California Subject Matter Projects (including content areas of History-Social Science, Mathematics, Science, and Writing). A middle school teacher characterized the activities as “helping to refresh me—to turn me around as a teacher.” This comment and other remarks from Santa Paula educators demonstrated that these professional development efforts, through their individual attention and investment in multiple educator-focused activities, meet multiple goals and objectives. Namely, UCSB professional development opportunities: (a) provide effective teaching strategies in the classroom (sometimes incorporating technology in innovative ways), (b) enhance teacher

Isbell teachers recommended that the MESA program increase their public relations efforts, field trip offerings, and introduction of role models to the community.

UCSB staff development programs “help to refresh me—to turn me around as a teacher.”
-- Isbell Middle School Teacher

UCSB professional development programs enhanced pedagogy, increased collaboration, reduced barriers to achievement, and improved morale.

“[The UCSB faculty are not] here to teach us how, but rather to join us. That’s what I love about this approach with the partnership.”

-- Santa Paula High School Teacher

collaboration and course articulation, (c) demonstrate instructional techniques suitable for the schools’ considerable ELL student population, (d) encourage the use of quality assessment data to improve placement decisions and modify instructional approaches to student strengths and needs, (e) increase teacher content knowledge and engagement in scholarly pursuits, (f) eliminate barriers to students’ access to a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, (g) expand the role of school counselors to contribute to advancing student achievement, and (h) improve teacher morale and reduce teacher burnout.

The collaborative teaching model practiced by UCSB Subject Matter Projects and the SUP program (where veteran classroom teachers, now employed as UCSB staff, provide classroom demonstrations and consultation to partnership school teachers) was highlighted by interviewees as offering Santa Paula teachers the unique opportunity to see their own students interact with another instructor. While most of the teachers believed it “rejuvenated” them and “validated that they were going in the right direction” with their students, another teacher acknowledged that it, in fact, opened his eyes to their new-found abilities. In working with the UCSB Academic Writing Partnership, he said he realized that “sometimes I’ve sold [my students] short. I’ve seen how they may not shine for you, but they can shine for someone else.”

Many teachers commented how the positive structure of the professional development programs did not impose an intimidating or hierarchical nature on them. Teachers confirmed that the UCSB faculty did not try to imply that *they*, as university representatives, were the experts. “[They are] not here to show us how to do it. It’s to show us possibilities and alternatives—how it could be done,” one teacher stressed. In fact, the teachers believed that it truly was a “partnership” with each professional learning from the other. “[The UCSB faculty are not] here to teach us how, but rather to join us. That’s what I love about this approach with the partnership,” another teacher asserted. “It’s like [they] provide us with some vitamins.” One high school teacher asserted that teachers across all grade levels respond well to this kind of collaborative coaching technique because it conveys to teachers that they are free to make their own adaptations suitable for their students and classroom environments. Other teachers concurred, citing their belief that the UCSB programs reduced teachers’ reluctance and intimidation. As a result, the teacher participants believe the Santa Paula teachers feel more confident in their methods and more open to working with UCSB as partners.

One middle school teacher enthusiastically described specific new teaching techniques introduced to her through UCSB institutes that meet the diverse learning and cultural needs of her students. The strategies encouraged her class, for example, to move around, to work in groups, to use a poem or a song, to engage in cooperative learning, and to infuse art in their work: “There were good ideas” offered at the institute, she said, “and there were things that other classrooms used that I adapted” to suit the needs of her ELL and special education students. The demonstration of effective teaching techniques that engaged the students in collaborative learning, provided hands-on strategies, exposed them to good models, and broke down assignments into workable “chunks,” all assisted the students in meeting the challenges with positive feedback and great success. Consequently, the teachers recognized the

students' increased skills in analyzing test prompts and questions, knowing what to write or how to solve problems, maintaining the proper conventions, and using feedback to continue their growth and learning to reach proficient levels across content areas. The students displayed these abilities in their improved scores on class exams as well as other standardized tests such as the California High School Exit Exam, the AP tests, and the Golden State Exams.

Still, one middle school teacher (and Oxnard school board member) acknowledged that some teachers may nevertheless be reluctant to engage in professional development activities, and UCSB must find ways to overcome these obstacles. He said, "We [teachers] are creatures of habit. We get into a comfortable place, and we don't like to leave our comfort zone." To make changes and transitions, he said, requires people to let go of old things, but often people don't want to throw away these objects of comfort—in fact, they hold on to them, packing them up and creating clutter. Similarly, teachers bring "baggage" with them to their classrooms, and they find it hard to move on. Dr. Brand, Santa Paula Superintendent, also commented on the difficulty of the change process in any community, especially one with a population like Santa Paula's. He believes that the UCSB Outreach programs, though, have sent the community a message that their students "can go anywhere they want to go" including to the University of California. Dr. Brand stressed that the key to the positive reform is changing the perception of the teachers, who in turn will ensure that the students are on track for college eligibility. When staff development is done in such a way as to support teachers and convey to them, "I'm here with you," Dr. Brand thinks that teacher buy-in and commitment to change will increase. When asked if the university's reputation imposed any kind of negative effect on teachers or counselors, all individuals interviewed answered negatively. In fact, the Superintendent affirmed that "people feel comfortable with the partnership and your [university] staff. If presentations were stiff, dogmatic, that would be the kiss of death—but they're not."

Teachers and administrators acknowledged in this context, too, the great challenges that the high school's block schedule inflicts on teachers' ability to participate in professional development activities as well as on the students' testing performances. Teachers "hate to be out of their classrooms" during the school day (mostly due to the burden of creating lesson plans for substitute teachers), and after-school meetings are difficult to arrange because of the conflicting district schedules and calendars (the elementary school district is not on a block schedule and even has different vacation periods). Most importantly, the structure causes serious flaws in the testing schedules. As one teacher described, "The kids in AP classes [the first term] have from January to May to forget all they learn until they take the AP test," while the students in the second term "don't get to the material" in time for the AP test administration. Similarly, for the CAT/6 tests, the second term students have not completed all of the standards by the time of the test, so "the kids lose out." Courses which rely heavily on accumulated knowledge—such as foreign language or mathematics—pose great difficulty to students within a block schedule. For this reason, Santa Paula educators expressed appreciation for the UCSB SUP program and their attempts to assist in solving some of these major district dilemmas, ranging from resolving Master Calendar difficulties (with the assistance of EdTrust-West consultation and conferences) to

"We [teachers] are creatures of habit. We get into a comfortable place, and we don't like to leave our comfort zone."
-- Isbell Middle School Teacher

Professional development efforts must compete with the Santa Paula High School's block schedule, misaligned testing calendars, an elementary district that is not unified, and the reluctance of teachers to leave their classrooms.

Educators in Santa Paula want additional site-based offerings of professional development including more weekend workshops, articulation meetings, and classroom coaching.

Most of the educators in Santa Paula described their districts' partnership with UCSB as a positive relationship with parallel goals and productive methods to increase student achievement.

articulation efforts across grade levels and within departments. In fact, articulation efforts often facilitated by UCSB staff were commonly noted by teachers and administrators alike as instrumental to course alignment and standards-based practice—elements critical to raising student achievement and test scores while strengthening teacher relationships. One SPSHS teacher shared, in reference to the articulation between the middle school and high school: “The collegiality, sharing, and networking is wonderful. It’s eye-opening for high school teachers to see the techniques and the success of middle school teachers.”

The teachers and administrators in Santa Paula are aware of the devastating implications of State budget cuts to most professional development programs, and they understand the limitations of programming next year. Nonetheless, in recognition of the commitment of the UCSB professional development staff and the critical needs their work addresses, the Santa Paula educators offered some suggestions for greater university involvement in their community. Above all, they recommended more intensive *site-based* offerings. One high school teacher, for example, expressed a desire to see more guest teachers demonstrating lessons and increased opportunities for teachers to share their own practices and methods with each other. Another high school teacher urged the development of Saturday workshops delivered in Santa Paula that focused on high school and middle school technology integration into various content areas. Yet another example mentioned was the offering of more intensive department articulation meetings facilitated by UCSB projects to “zero in on a topic” and, in camaraderie of fellow colleagues, to align curriculum. For instance, the teacher would like to collaboratively develop a unit with his colleagues that covers the standards of a particular year, simultaneously weaving in standardized assessment tools (with consistent scoring rubrics) across classrooms; yet he understands that this is “a momentous task that requires a momentous amount of time.” Principal Gaitan agreed, stressing his growing concern that the high school needs to continue to examine their curriculum for its calibration to the State standards and more thoroughly assess student work. He wants more evidence that they are meeting the standards at each grade level, and he’s hoping to expose more teachers and counselors to workshops and conferences that will help them to grow professionally, to come back rejuvenated, and to increase their effective practices in their classrooms and with students.

How the Santa Paula High School-University Partnership is Characterized

When asked, most administrators and teachers in Santa Paula described their districts’ partnership with UCSB as a positive relationship with parallel goals and productive methods to increase the achievement of their students. Some respondents, especially the long-term administrators of the districts, had insight into the historical perspective of the development of the partnership, and they reflected on its inception and evolution in the last five or six years.

For instance, Superintendent Brand discussed his work upon arrival at the district in 1996 to change all standard classes offered at the high school into college preparatory classes and to augment the schedule with Honors and

Advanced Placement courses. During that year, he recalled that 11 students applied to four-year universities, but only four students eventually enrolled. Despite the fact that a majority of attendants at the School Board Meetings were convinced that his reform movement would cause the “sky to fall down,” Dr. Brand was persistent. He invited a few former SPHS students to discuss their success in college, and the students told Board and community members that the high schoolers needed to “feel their dreams are reachable.” After years of work, Dr. Brand was proud to document that this year, 125 students applied to four-year universities, and between 50-75 students will be attending these colleges. “I give all the credit to the UCSB partnership—from the counselor [site coordinator Concha Soto] to Tom [Ostwald]’s commitment to just being there,” he commended. “Their work has convinced them that it is positive and can be done.”

While Superintendent Brand wanted to pay the partnership a “great compliment” for “providing real meat and individuals who help us step over the line for the kids,” he also recognized that Santa Paula needed to work on getting their own staff more committed to outreach. “It’s not your fault,” he conceded, admitting that teachers in his district (especially in the math department) needed to participate more, and they needed to increase their support of articulation efforts with the middle school. Dr. Brand believes the schools’ mutual goals should be to increase standardized test scores in addition to moving more students into the system of higher education. He referred to dismal statistics about the achievement level of high school freshmen in Santa Paula: 76% are below the 50th percentile on the STAR tests. But Dr. Brand has hope that the districts will collaborate together, raise the bar, and increase their students’ perceptions that they can go to college. With a new principal at Isbell Middle School, who was also the previous principal at the alternative high school (Renaissance High) and an assistant principal at Santa Paula High School, Dr. Brand is optimistic that there will be more accountability between the districts and more students at grade level upon entrance to high school.

Principal Gaitan generally concurred, stating that both UCSB and SPHS are living up to their partnership agreements. He did, however, express concerns (echoed at times by other partnership administrators and teachers) about whether the university’s research and philosophy might sometimes be at odds with districts’ priorities: a divergence of “theorists versus practitioners” in some respects. Mr. Gaitan elaborated that schools are feeling great pressure to raise graduation rates, API scores, California High School Exit Exam pass rates, and curriculum alignment to State standards. University educators and outreach staff generally place more emphasis on innovative teaching methods and increasing the number of underrepresented students on their campuses. While not completely incompatible, university and school partners sometimes clash over these objectives and the methods with which to best achieve them. “Are the goals aligned?” Mr. Gaitan wondered. He implored the university to understand the schools must be focused on the standards, and he believes it is imperative for the partnership to demonstrate to teachers, staff, and administrators across the systems that their goals are united and mutual.

A Santa Paula middle school teacher similarly described his colleagues’ view of the university’s position and teachers’ reluctance to engage in professional

The partnership provides “real meat and individuals who help us step over the line for the kids.”

**-- Dr. Brand,
Superintendent**

Partnership school administrators recognize that sometimes the university’s “theoretical perspective” can be at odds with the school districts’ “practitioner perspective.”

University research is a good reminder to teachers that “education is an on-going, dynamic process. Change is inherent.”

-- Isbell Middle School Teacher

development. He conceded that sometimes the university is seen as not having a strong connection to the realities of teaching—to teachers’ daily experiences of receiving negative responses from students. “It’s not easy, and sometimes people make comments out of frustration,” he explained, listing the many stressors of a typical teacher from dealing with problem behaviors to focusing on standards all in the context of uncontrollable factors such as students’ socioeconomic level. When teachers engage with the university, he continued, it is easy for them to have the attitude, “You’re not really in the class. What do *you* know?”

Another high school teacher agreed, describing the attitudes of some of her colleagues as resistant: “Unfortunately,” she said, “some teachers feel that ‘you’re not going to teach me something I don’t already know.’” While UCSB outreach staff have been successful in working with particular teachers at SPHS, others refuse to participate. As the teacher liaison at the high school, Margaret Booker believes that her job is, in a sense, “to convert these reluctant teachers” and to facilitate and encourage them “to keep an open mind.” Ms. Booker finds it especially helpful for the university to provide the high school with “experts” that help teachers understand “what the students need to know in the university.”

While somewhat discouraged by teacher reluctance, educators in Santa Paula remain optimistic that the partnership with the university can open new doors and avenues to student achievement and teacher professional development. Art Lopez, mathematics teacher and MESA advisor at Isbell Middle School, said, “Our experiences with the university have been positive so far in people learning, in professional growth.” He believes that the research occurring at the university is, in fact, a good reminder to teachers (especially the novice ones) that, “Education is an on-going, dynamic process. Change is inherent. It’s not just about kicking out the standards.” Mr. Lopez asserted that engaging in dialogue with the university helps teachers to see that fact—that they can always renew their skills and learn from others. “The experience is invaluable,” he declared. He also affirmed that “UCSB has come a long way” in terms of its reputation with the community. More people recognize the campus for its “great engineering department, marine biology, and Nobel prizes,” he says. Mr. Lopez believes that these accomplishments have done a lot for the university’s positive status in the community: UCSB has “a very solid faculty, really great teachers, and strong departments. But,” he cautioned, “you’ll never get away from professional jealousy.” Mr. Lopez referred to the envious location of the university in a Santa Barbara beach resort town. “Some of that colors the situation unfairly.” Still, he and his high school coworkers seem to share a positive attitude: with a new superintendent arriving in the district, financial stability, and resources at hand, the educators look forward to additional opportunities for collaboration, intensive students support, and positive school reform supported in part by the university.

Additional Suggestions for Improvement of UCSB Outreach Activities

While most respondents in the interviews claimed a great deal of satisfaction with the breadth and scope of UCSB’s outreach activities in Santa Paula, many

also provided some constructive feedback about potential areas of improvement. The SPHS students had some of the most practical, valuable suggestions to increase the extent of the outreach program's reach. For example, one recommendation they furthered was for UCSB to work harder to "get the word out" about opportunities for higher education to the entire student body. Even though the posters depicting A-G courses appear in almost every class and teachers emphasize the concept, the students recognized that college information was really only offered in detail to those students in AP classes. The students also advocated for UCSB offering Spanish sessions at *all* of their workshops, conferences, and parent meetings. Even though the students recognized that the annual "Junior Night" included sessions in Spanish and English about which classes students should take to adequately prepare for college, they stressed that the junior year is much too late for this information to be disseminated. These kinds of activities, they strongly urged, should be provided in the 8th grade in formats that fully include Spanish-speaking students and their parents.

Additional recommendations for UCSB Outreach from the students, teachers, and administrators of Santa Paula are highlighted below.

Capitalize on Role Models

Overwhelmingly, participants in the interviews stressed the potent effect of role models on students and their families in Santa Paula. Dr. Brand illustrated this fact by discussing his pride in the SPHS 2003 valedictorian. She is the third daughter of a migrant family, who came to the United States in 1987. Currently, she has a 4.7 GPA and is planning to attend the University of California. "That's what your system needs to instill," he encouraged, "especially with the 6th to 8th grade kids." Dr. Brand suggested that efforts to "find diamonds in the rough" that increase the community's perceptions that their students can achieve would be a great "boon" to Santa Paula.

The SPHS students agreed, emphasizing that student-to-student outreach was a powerful way to deliver advice and information about college. They suggested that a group of students from UCSB should come to the high school campus to share their experiences and answer questions. In fact, most of the students in attendance were anxious to provide that kind of service for their high school colleagues when they are, themselves, undergraduate role models. Likewise, one of the high school counselors shared that CSU Northridge routinely brings a team of undergraduate students to the SPHS campus to present an influential curriculum to students in their classrooms. He believes that UCSB should initiate a similar practice, and he furthered the point that the presence of former SPHS alumni who are current coeds is an extremely compelling intervention for high schoolers.

Teachers at SPHS also advocated for the students' increased exposure to role models, and one social science teacher elaborated on his recommendations for the content of their interactions. Mr. Tonello wholeheartedly believes that students at SPHS need to hear the critical messages from undergraduates about how they can be successful at the university—such as their need to be dedicated to "staying on top of assignments" and managing their time well.

SPHS students strongly recommended that all UCSB outreach activities be offered to middle school students in formats that fully include Spanish-speaking students and their parents.

Educators and students also highlighted the powerful effect of positive role models on the Santa Paula community.

Mentors could offer high school students the opportunity “to see what it’s like to go from [college] class to class, to see the workload. Honesty—that’s what they need to hear, but from a fellow student!”

-- Paul Tonello,
SPHS Teacher

“Put it in [middle school students’] minds that the college process is important. Don’t wait until the 10th grade.”

-- SPHS Student

The most effective role models, he believes, are ones that deliver the message that college is a balancing act between social and academic demands. Too many students, he thinks, have the wrong expectations and need to learn responsibility. SPHS has provided a supportive and caring environment for their students, but when on their own in college, they are at risk of being misguided or disillusioned. Mr. Tonello believes it is important to have undergraduates give advice to students, and for the students to learn more strongly the fundamentals of reading and writing—as well as a strong work ethic. Ideally, he envisions a mentor-type program that would pair a junior in high school with a junior in college. With their mentor, the high school student would have the opportunity to attend college courses, “to see what it’s like to go from class to class, to see the workload. Honesty—that’s what they need to hear, but from a fellow student!” In addition, Mr. Tonello remarked, “They should be shown, ‘If you get in trouble—here’s places to go to get help.’” He stressed that the students should be well aware of the safety net and support services available to help those in need if the demands do get overwhelming.

Increase Parent Involvement

Since most of the SPHS students were not aware of any parent-focused education component occurring at the high school that pertained to college preparation, they also strongly endorsed more attention to parent involvement in outreach activities. Educators, too, lauded the powerful impact of parent engagement, and they strongly encouraged that UCSB Outreach focus additional efforts in this arena. Teachers declared that parents are critical to the lives of students, and they recognized that Santa Paula students take their cues from their family concerning life decisions. Therefore, interviewees recommended that UCSB should capitalize on the community’s pride in their relatives who have gone on to higher education to make the connection to the university even stronger. In addition, educators implored UCSB to engage in more dialogue with parents about their students’ potential and options in advancing to postsecondary education—from community college opportunities to four-year universities.

Concentrate on Early Intervention Services

A majority of the interview respondents in Santa Paula underscored the importance of UCSB Outreach reaching a middle school and even elementary school audience. SPHS students strongly emphasized that outreach must provide services, support, and information earlier in the academic pipeline, and that UCSB work to make their presentations more fun and motivating for this younger population. “Put it in their minds that the college process is important. Don’t wait until the 10th grade,” admonished one student. Another student cautioned that the middle schoolers should be advised that high school “is not just about having fun or getting easy credits.” For example, many of her friends have mistakenly taken easy electives or opted to be a teacher’s assistant rather than challenge themselves with college prep courses.

Similarly, a middle school teacher stressed the need for UCSB to examine their work at the primary level, especially grades K-3, to “look closely at what you are doing there.” Mr. Lopez wholeheartedly endorsed that the outreach efforts

should “catch the kids early to increase their chances” for growth and progress, calling for greater linkages between the middle school and K-6 level of instruction, too. He believes that too often, people look directly at the middle school level for preparation in algebra, for example, but the “building blocks begin in grades K, 1, 2, 3! You need the fundamentals in grades 4 to 5.” Thus, he supports additional services to the districts to provide before- and after-school programs with a direct purpose. “Well-meaning programs may just be daycare,” he cautioned. Mr. Lopez wants to ensure that academic enrichment programs offered by the university are on task and accountable, targeting the continuum of articulation efforts among instructional levels.

Furthermore, one high school teacher also recommended that teachers and parents be influenced to talk with their students earlier on about college and financial aid and/or scholarship opportunities. While a visiting parent in her classroom mentioned her belief that scholarship information was irrelevant to sophomores, Ms. Booker subscribes to the belief that it is *never* too early—the students should be told for years about this information, so that they will absorb it and never believe that the financial challenges are a true barrier to their continued education.

Examine Admissions Policies

A major issue on the minds of many interview participants was the disillusionment of students, who upon meeting the obligations of membership in UCSB’s Early Academic Outreach Program (including taking college preparatory courses, maintaining an adequate GPA, engaging in test preparation and taking the entrance examinations, and participating in extra-curricular activities) and/or fulfilling the requirements for admission to the University of California, were nevertheless *not* accepted to UCSB. Administrators, counselors, and teachers in Santa Paula encouraged UCSB to work on initiating some guarantees for students and their families in response to their commitment of effort.

For example, Dr. Brand reflected on his experiences with the newly-opening Cal State Channel Islands as one of their first “pilot schools.” He was invited in 1997 for a summer meeting with the system’s Vice President and other school districts to be introduced to the university. At the meeting, the message was clear that the system was looking for commitments to college preparatory curriculum. When the CSU Vice President asked the superintendents what their needs were, Dr. Brand spoke up about partnership: “If we meet your expectations about admissions requirements, then you accept our kids!” This idea was welcomed by the Vice President, and he initiated a process where all juniors from the pilot schools would be tested in mathematics and English. If they passed the tests, he promised that they would automatically be admitted to CSUCI. In addition, the system committed to providing on-line tutoring to help the students in their preparation for the tests. “That’s the kind of thing the [UCSB] partnership needs to do,” suggested Dr. Brand.

A major issue in the minds of many educators was the disillusionment of SPHS students who fulfilled admissions requirements, but who nevertheless were not accepted to UCSB.

Conclusion

UCSB Outreach services have provided the community of Santa Paula with rich and varied academic enrichment activities for their students and professional development opportunities for their teachers. From test preparation and college advising offered by UCSB Early Academic Outreach to field trips and academic competitions sponsored by the MESA program, students in the middle school and high school have excelled in college preparatory courses, increased standardized achievement scores, and improved their attitudes and expectations about going to college. Teachers have also learned how to enhance their pedagogy for heterogeneous classrooms, to increase their collaboration, and to articulate with colleagues in various grade levels and across content areas. Yet obstacles remain within the partnership primarily due to misaligned master calendars and testing schedules, reluctance among some teacher participants, and inconsistency in the school site coordinator position.

Despite some challenges and amidst devastating budget cuts, there was an indisputable affirmation of the Santa Paula's students' potential and their families' strengths.

Despite these challenges and amidst devastating State budget cuts, there was an indisputable affirmation of the Santa Paula students' potential and their families' strengths among all individuals interviewed. As one high school teacher said, "Don't forget about us out here. I appreciate that you're here and willing to listen and help our kids. We have a lot of potential in the community." To capitalize upon these community assets, Santa Paula students and educators recommended that UCSB Outreach uphold three critical tenets in their programs: early intervention, positive role modeling, and reciprocal commitment. They stressed that UCSB focus more attention on elementary and middle schoolers and their families, capitalize on good examples in the community, and guarantee that partnership school students who meet their obligations will be welcomed by the university as admitted students.

Mr. Gaitan summed it up by saying, "My idea is, it's great to talk. But let's *take action*. The partnership has taken action on a lot of our ideas, and that's great." Through its dedication to an outreach partnership, increasing development of college preparatory courses, innovative and individualized attention to teacher and student needs, and uncompromising belief in its potential, the outreach staff and educators at Santa Paula High School are indeed earnestly trying to take action to realize their students' dreams.



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