

“Dare to Dream College”™ Emphasizes Academic Preparation While Showcasing UCSD to African American Community

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Students arrive at *Dare to Dream College* event. (Photos by Sandra Younger)

In an event accented by hands-on workshops, class lectures, laboratory visits, campus tours and interaction with UCSD faculty and undergraduates, 425 pre-college students and their parents got more than just a savory taste of university life this month when they attended *Dare to Dream College : The African Experience at UCSD*.

"As an African American," said one parent who participated, "I think this event not only challenged young Black students to dare to dream college and to go after that dream, but also challenged parents to get involved, and stay involved, in preparing their children for higher education -starting in early childhood."

Indeed, the message of early academic preparation and active parental involvement were important goals when UCSD Student Educational Advancement (a division of Student Affairs) joined with the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) of San Diego and Imperial Counties in sponsoring *Dare to Dream College*. The event was not only intended to help enhance college-going rates of African Americans in San Diego, but to also provide an opportunity to showcase the academic and career opportunities UCSD has to offer.

From the early months of planning *Dare to Dream College*, its coordinators received support from various sectors of the Black community, including African American churches, teachers, schools, parent and social groups, and businesses, in addition to assistance from the San Diego Community College District and other partners.

And from UCSD, the event enjoyed the participation and support from the Chancellor's Office, faculty, staff, Student Affairs, the Black Student Union and other undergraduates.

"It was truly both a community and university effort," report Loren Thompson, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Student Educational Advancement (SEA), and Linda Doughty, Director, Cal-SOAP.

The event immersed 4th through 12th grade students in various interactive activities with faculty, staff and undergraduates based upon students' grade levels and academic interest. These included workshops on why college is important, how to develop "mental toughness" for college, a debate with the UCSD Black Student Union on overcoming peer pressure, tour of the Neurosciences Laboratory at the School of Medicine, lecture on Chinese language and culture, lectures on Black history, and tour of a genetics research laboratory and the CAVE area at Calit2.

Penny Rue, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, enjoys the event's morning presentation.

Meanwhile, parents attended informative and motivational sessions that addressed their particular needs and concerns including workshops on how to be advocates for their children's education, negotiating college for their

children, and a special stage reading and panel discussion on how to speak to children about the importance of college.

Attendees also got to further interact with UCSD faculty, undergraduates and staff over lunch at the Geisel Library Plaza, and received information on other UCSD programs and services (ranging from the National Society of Black Engineers, and the African American Studies Minor to Admissions, TRIO Outreach Programs, OASIS and the Chicano/Latino Arts and Humanities Minor) at information tables along Library Walk.

"From the attendance and the very positive comments we have received on the event, we think *Dare to Dream College* represents a major stepping stone for us to build upon in future outreach to the African American community and to other underrepresented and/or first-generation college populations," says Assistant Vice Chancellor Thompson.

Plans are underway to make *Dare to Dream College* an annual event and to follow up with event attendees for inclusion in additional college preparation activities. SEA already conducts a similar annual event for American Indian pre-college students and parents, and a similar annual event is also being planned for the Latino community.

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