

## UCSD's Early Academic Outreach Program Honors High School Counselors at the First Annual Counselors' Luncheon

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UCSD's Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) recently invited more than 40 San Diego area high school counselors to a catered luncheon to recognize the great work they are doing. The luncheon was intended to highlight the collaboration offered by EAOP and reinforce EAOP's role as a support to counselors in preparing students for a college bound path. EAOP offers both counselors and their students vital support in college preparation and planning.

EAOP's services range from one-on-one tutoring, mentoring, A-G course requirement guidance, standardized test preparation and personal college application assistance with first generation, economically disadvantaged and traditionally under-served students to parent involvement events, like the annual College Expo College Fair, and financial aid workshops for the wider student population. "Working with EAOP gives us first hand answers to questions that students ask. We get the most recent information about local colleges and it means that the University (UCSD) is more present and tangible for the students" said Castle Park High School Counselor, Hector Miranda.

San Diego's counselors are often unrecognized for their tireless work guiding high school students toward a brighter future. Even with the recent legislation allocating additional funding at the state level for more high school counselors, professionals in the field are feeling the strain as they wait for change to occur. Due to a number of factors, political and otherwise, many of San Diego County's high schools have too few counselors for the number of students attending their institutions. This results in a heavy case load for these counselors, who often can't find time to work in depth with students in helping them plan for college. Most high school counselors carry a roster of anywhere from 250 students at the smaller high schools to 600 students per counselor at the larger institutions. In fact, the national average of K-12 students to counselor ratio is 477 to one. California ranks 51 st among all states with a ratio of 934 to one for K-12 students and 486 to one in California high schools where the recommended ratio is 250 to one.

In light of these statistics as documented on [www.schoolcounselor.org](http://www.schoolcounselor.org) it is clear that EAOP serves an important role to ensure a path to post secondary education for many high school students. According to Counselor, Andreanna Murphy, at San Diego School of Science and Technology, "I have limited time to actually sit in a one-on-one setting doing college applications, and it's hard to be continually monitoring progress. So, with programs like EAOP and the help of the tutors, they are able to actually step in where I'm unable to due to time constraints and the duties I have. For the past three years we've had someone meet with our seniors in the fall and spend time getting them locked in, reviewing their transcripts and working on their personal statements. And they're getting it direct from a source of someone that's in college."

Angel De Niz, a senior at SciTech High, said, "Ms. Murphy made sure I knew about the online classes offered through UCSD. I was able to take an extra AP class over the summer to increase my GPA and free up my schedule for the regular school year. During that AP Government class I really got to know the EAOP tutors and realized that they really had fun at college. Before that, I thought college would be all work and I didn't know if I really even wanted to go."

"Before EAOP's presence here three years ago, I only had 10 students go to a four year University out of a senior class of about 65. Last year I had about 18 or 20, this year I had 50 out of 80 applying to the UC's and CSU's" Murphy said. "The students hear a lot from us, but they know that's our job. The fact that they interact with real college students, who are at the University and not much older than they are, makes attending college a goal that's more in reach" Murphy said.

Pablo Arellano, a senior at Castle Park High, is applying for admission next fall to UC Berkley, UCLA, UCSD, UC Riverside, SDSU, Notre Dame, Princeton and, possibly, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); he wants to design cars as a career. His counselor, Hector Miranda, has 399 other students to guide towards college. EAOP Assistant Director for the South Bay, Mario Aguilar, has been offering guidance to Arellano on the personal statement for his college applications. EAOP tutor, Tomas Oliva, has been working with Arellano as a tutor/mentor. "I got a lot of advice on my personal statement from Mario and Tomas helped me fill out my applications. Mario showed me how to expand on my personal statement to include more reasons for wanting to attend each school and Tomas guided me on how to figure out what income to declare on the application" Arellano said.

Each year, the collaboration between EAOP and high school counselors is helping students prepare for college and achieve their goals in being admitted. With the current student to counselor ratio, it is crucial, not only that EAOP continues working in the high schools with these students, but also that counselors are honored for the excellent work they are doing under these stressful circumstances. EAOP, therefore, will continue to support and honor counselors both in the schools, and through recognition with events like the annual counselors' luncheon.

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