

Early Academic Outreach Program Gives Students a Jump Start on College Preparedness Through New Online AP Course Initiative

November 9, 2006

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The Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) at the University of California, San Diego is using the wonders of cyberspace to give economically disadvantaged high school students a competitive edge toward college success. In partnership with the University of California College Prep (UCCP) Summer Academy, EAOP is offering its high school students the opportunity to take college credit-bearing Advanced Placement (AP) courses online in structured sessions during the summer months, and during the regular academic year at no cost to students. The online courses offered by UCSD EAOP through UCCP in cooperation with the UC Office of the President (UCOP) not only serve to keep first-generation college students on track for competitive college admission, but also assist underserved high schools significantly by making access to AP courses at many of these institutions more available.

Similar courses are also being offered through UCCP at other UC campuses. More than 70 UCSD EAOP students, representing seven high schools in Imperial County and San Diego's Central and South Bay regions received online AP instruction last summer through the UCCP-EAOP effort. And another 20 students from Imperial Valley are now enrolled in the online classes this fall.

Furthermore, the students will continue to receive academic tutoring and mentoring through EAOP until they take the AP test later this spring. Scoring well on the AP test means students earn required college course credits prior to attending college. Since UCSD EAOP officially began the online courses in 2005 as part of the UCCP Summer Academy, the initiative has realized "positive growth," says EAOP Director, Rafael Hernandez.

For instance, enrollment during 2006 academic year more than doubled for online AP classes and there are an additional five students already scheduled to take online classes during the Spring semester of 2007. And more importantly, the pass rate for the 2006 summer class was 98 percent, with almost half of the students completing the program earning an "A" letter grade and more than a quarter of them earning a "B." "There is demonstrated positive growth with the program" says Hernandez. Classes in AP Government, AP Environmental Science and Honors Psychology were offered last summer, in addition to a non AP Health class.

All costs related to the online courses, including course fees, registration, text books, a follow up AP review session prior to the final AP exam, and the year-end AP exam were paid by UCSD's EAOP. Classes were held in the computer labs at selected schools in the various regions for roughly 20 hours per week during the summer. "We had a lot of one-on-one interaction even with 20 to 30 students per class," says 25-year EAOP veteran, Assistant Director, Thomas Gilkison. "Six EAOP student mentors were there to assist everyday too. Overall the whole process was positive."

Just like any typical AP class, the midterm and final exams were proctored live. Afterwards, the exams were faxed to UCOP for scoring. Throughout the instruction, students visited the UCOP website and could go to UCCP class discussion boards to read and submit dialog and responses to other students' questions and assignments.

"UCCP gave students an opportunity to take classes they normally would not have been able to take, which in turn makes them competitively eligible for college admissions" says EAOP Senior Learning Skills Counselor, Luis Clement. "With the changing landscape in education a lot of college classes are being offered online, so it gave students the opportunity to try that format" Clement said.

EAOP intends to continue offering this college preparation opportunity to its students in the future. UCSD EAOP is a unit of the university's Student Educational Advancement, a division of Student Affairs whose mission is to prepare low-income, first-generation college students for higher education success, including graduate school.

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