

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Kristin Luciani

Nov 13, 2014



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

Local High School Students Encouraged to Achieve UC

At Castle Park High School last Friday, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs Juan González shared with students his own experience with applying to college and working to succeed as an undergraduate. A first-generation college student, González overcame many of the same challenges—and fears—that students today face in pursuing higher education.

“What I see is a younger version of myself,” González told the hundreds of students gathered in the school gym. “When I was in your chair, I was so scared. I didn’t know what I wanted to be doing.”

González was visiting the Chula Vista school as part of Achieve UC, a University of California initiative that aims to help more students understand that a college education is attainable and affordable. The system-wide outreach event seeks to both inspire students to see themselves as college students, and provide them with the practical support to realize their educational goals.

González continued by explaining that Upward Bound—a U.S. Department of Education college-prep program—first introduced him to the concept of going to college. Through Upward Bound, he stayed in college residence halls and received assistance filling out college applications and financial aid forms. The program also found someone to talk with his parents, in Spanish, about college.

“The people at the university invested in me,” he said. “My career began as a student receiving an enormous amount of assistance. Now, I’m invested in educating young men and women in the service of others. You are bright, you are intelligent, we believe in you, and UC awaits you. You’ve got what it takes.”



One of the goals of Achieve UC is to educate students about the UC Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan, which covers the full cost of tuition for students whose families earn \$80,000 a year or less. Lupe Macario, senior associate director at the financial aid office at UC San Diego, talked with students about the Blue and Gold plan as well as other scholarship and financial aid resources. High school students planning to attend community college first were encouraged to look at UniversityLink, which provides guaranteed admission to UC San Diego for eligible, low income local students from the region’s

community colleges.

Additional speakers included current undergraduate Hilda Graciela Uriarte. A fourth-year political science major, Uriarte shared how her background growing up in a small agricultural town in the Central Valley has helped drive her motivation to succeed in college. She plans to pursue a career to help youth from similar communities realize their higher education goals.

Uriarte, who works at the UC San Diego Raza Resource Center and also gives campus tours for undergraduate admissions, encouraged the Castle Park students to visit the La Jolla campus.

“I hope all of you can come to UC San Diego,” she said. “Visit the Raza Resource Center, visit the Admissions Office and take a tour. We’ll be happy to have you.”

Following the assembly, the students were divided into groups by grade level to participate in presentations and workshops on topics such as college life, preparing to apply to college and writing their personal statement. UC San Diego students and staff representatives from the Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), Admissions Office and the Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment and Teaching Excellence (CREATE) were present to answer questions and talk with students about the path to UC.

Meanwhile, González met with teachers and counselors to talk about what it takes to get a Castle Park student into UC San Diego, including being prepared for undergraduate-level work. One of the common themes of the discussion was the need to bring students to campus so that they can picture themselves as college students. The group also talked about the Common Core standards and preparing students for college-level coursework. Throughout the discussion, both the Castle Park and UC San Diego representatives emphasized the need for ongoing collaboration and communication.

The teachers underscored the importance of getting parents involved, and making sure that families have information about the college-going resources available to their students. Robert Manroe, a biology teacher, told González that his talk to the students was great. He added, “That connection you made with students in the gym today, you need to make it with the parents, too.”

Keep up with campus news by subscribing to *This Week @ UC San Diego*