

UC San Diego

UC San Diego News Center

By Christine Clark Oct 25, 2012

Chancellor Khosla's Message to High School Students: A World-Class Education is Within Your Reach

Visit to area high schools part of Achieve UC initiative



Photos by Erik Jepsen/UC San Diego Publications

UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep K. Khosla addressed some 400 Southwest High School students who had gathered Thursday to hear him speak about how they could attend a University of California campus. There is no doubt he had found a receptive audience. When Khosla asked how many of the

students planned to attend college, he watched as nearly every student in the gymnasium took to their feet.

“We admit students independent of their ability to pay,” Khosla told them. “So when you think about going to college, the last thing you should think about or worry about is, ‘How am I going to pay?’ The first thing you should think about is, ‘What college do I want to go to? When am I going to apply? And am I working hard enough?’”



Khosla’s visit to Southwest High in the Southbay—and Gompers Preparatory Academy in Southeast San Diego later that day—was part of a new University of California initiative called Achieve UC, the university’s first coordinated effort to show students from diverse, low-income communities that higher education is within their reach. The system-wide initiative brought UC leaders and admissions counselors into high schools around the state. In all, about 10,000 students were encouraged to aim for college, and offered practical guidance on how to get there.

After Khosla’s talk, students at Southwest High attended workshops on how to prepare for college, write their personal statements and apply for financial aid.

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.

Achieve UC was, in part, inspired by outreach events at several underserved high schools attended by UC President Mark Yudof; Yudof found that more students from these schools applied to UCs after his visits.

“I’ve visited high schools up and down the state, and it’s always exciting to see students learn about the financial support that exists and discover that a University of California education is attainable,” Yudof said. “If they push themselves, work hard and dream big, we’ll make sure the doors of opportunity are open to them. We want their talents, their passion and their perspectives.”

Khosla echoed that message while speaking with students at both schools.

“Our school was built to educate the best of the best,” Khosla told students gathered at Gompers. “You all belong at the University of California because it is one of the top institutions in the world. I hope you make it your dream to attend UC San Diego because you are our future leaders.”

The Gompers’ visit also celebrated the partnership the preparatory academy has with UC San Diego and the unique history of the school.

For years, Gompers was plagued with low test scores and violence, but in 2005 an intense effort began to remake the sixth-to-ninth-grade campus into a sixth-to-twelfth-grade college-preparatory charter school.

With help from UC San Diego and grants from foundations, instruction has been revamped and 100 percent of Gompers' graduates now go on to college after they graduate.

The college-bound culture of the school helped Gompers' senior Raymundo Morales earn the confidence to know he will be a college graduate in the near future. "Before I came here, I didn't know college was a reality," Morales said. "When I got to Gompers, I started to think more about how I would be a success and what I would do with my life."

Morales plans on studying engineering in college, an interest that was sparked when he was a child. "I used to watch my dad work on cars," he said. "I looked up to him and what he did and it became my dream to build things."

Morales is applying to several colleges, including UC San Diego, UC Merced, UC Riverside, San Diego State University and UC Davis.

The vast majority of the Gompers' graduating senior class will move on to four-year colleges, and the remaining students will attend community college with the goal of transferring to a four-year university.

At Gompers, the workshops for students were geared towards seniors and focused on how to best complete college applications, apply for financial aid and make the transition to a four-year university.



"One of the major themes of the day has been that higher education is attainable, whether it is at a Cal State school, UC or community college," said Jaime Velasco, a UC San Diego admissions officer. "We want to show the students the various entry paths into higher education."

Luis Lopez, a senior who is in the process of applying to several UC and California State University campuses, said the day was an exciting opportunity to show the community the hard work being done by Gompers' students.

“It’s an honor to have the chancellor from UC San Diego visit our wonderful school,” Lopez said. “We’re very focused on our work, so it is good to have the opportunity to show people who we are and what we’re capable of doing.”

For Khosla, what the Gompers students are capable of doing is nothing short of astonishing. “These students come from all different backgrounds and 100 percent of them are going to college,” Khosla said. “It’s amazing and truly impressive.”

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