

## Latino Families to Gather at UCSD May 31 for *Comienza con un Sueño* College Outreach Event

*Many Latinos from an early age are encouraged to pursue a college education as a means of dreaming big, dreaming beyond their parents' lives in many cases. College is often seen as a vehicle for fulfilling family and community hopes and wishes for a better tomorrow. -Carri Fierro and Rafael Hernandez, UCSD Student Educational Advancement*

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Nurturing the desire for college and keeping it on track is the purpose of *Comienza con un Sueño* (It Begins with a Dream), a major college outreach event taking place this month at UCSD. Aimed at Latino and Mexican American students, parents and families, this free event will be held Saturday, May 31 from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in various stages on Library Walk, Center Hall and Geisel Library terrace.

More than 700 attendees from San Diego and Imperial counties are expected.

In a cultural atmosphere replete with keynote addresses and presentations by Latino role models, the event will center on empowering 6th through 12th grade students and their parents with key information on academic preparation, how to succeed in college and how to prepare for the hot careers of today, say *Comienza's* organizers.

"Like other major ethnic minority groups, the college-going rate of Latinos and Mexican Americans remains significantly low," says Rafael Hernandez, director of UCSD's Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP) who is spearheading the coordination of the event with Carri Fierro, director of UCSD's TRIO Outreach Programs under Student Educational Advancement. "Many students at the event will be the first in their family to attend college upon high school graduation," Hernandez continues, "so it is important that students learn early what it takes to develop good study skills, excel and graduate once admitted to college."

Adds Fierro: "Another goal of *Comienza* is to let students know about life beyond college graduation - such as tips on succeeding in their careers, pursuing an advanced degree, and how students can return to the community from which they came to serve as role models to others." This is the first of what will be an annual event, Hernandez and Fierro say.

*Comienza*-a collaboration between UCSD and a host of community partners-will also feature interactive sessions specifically for parents, including bilingual workshops on finding money for college, help with the college application process, and how parents can be strong advocates for their children's education. Latino and Mexican American art, dancing and music will add a genuine flair to the day.

"We want this event to be a special one both educationally and culturally," says Fierro. "It's a golden opportunity for us to showcase the many hallmarks of UCSD, including its academic opportunities, and to let students know we want them to succeed here."

Comienza is a joint partnership between UC San Diego's Office of the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Center for Research on Educational Equity, Assessment, and Teaching Excellence (CREATE), Chicano/Latino/Arts & Humanities Minor, TRIO Outreach Programs, Early Academic Outreach Program (EAOP), Office of Academic Support & Instructional Services (OASIS), Academic Enrichment Programs (AEP), Student Educational Advancement (SEA), SHAPES, Cross-Cultural Center, and Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers; and community partners, including the Price Charities; the Parent Institute for Educational Equity; Fidelity/ScholarShare; the Lemon Grove School District; and the San Diego County Office of Education.

The event evolved from the success of other major UCSD-sponsored outreach events to underrepresented populations. These include the Dare to Dream College event (held for the first time last November for the African American community), and I'm Going to College (held for the American Indian reservation communities). Both are annual events.

For more information on Comienza and to register, visit: <http://sea.ucsd.edu/comienza>

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