



## Pilot Project Opens Doors for High Schoolers to Complete College Courses Without Leaving Campus

Teaching an introductory college biology course is nothing new for Keefe Reuther, who has been an instructor of biology at UC San Diego since 2009.

What is different this year is who some of his students are. In addition to teaching a class of 200 first-year college students, he's also teaching that same course to 35 seniors at Point Loma High School.

Reuther's introductory class on ecology and evolution is part of an innovative pilot program through UC San Diego Extension to offer college courses to select junior and seniors at three area high schools. The aim of the program, which is offered through a partnership with San Diego Unified

School District, is to allow students to earn university credits, helping them better prepare for the rigors of higher education while reducing the time and cost of college.

“This will allow qualified high schoolers to earn college credits at no extra cost to them,” said Ed Abeyta, director of pre-collegiate programs at UC San Diego Extension. “It is like advanced placement, or AP, courses on steroids, with students taking college classes that deliver the academic rigor for which UC San Diego is known.”

Reuther said his Point Loma students are certainly up to the challenge.

“I just gave them their mid-term and their average was higher than the average of the undergraduate students I teach,” he said.

In addition to Point Loma High, UC San Diego Extension is offering the classes at La Jolla High School and University City High School. Officials at San Diego Unified selected those three campuses because the school site leaders requested to participate in the pilot program and pledged to offer the proper support system to ensure the program’s success. San Diego Unified staff also identified juniors and seniors at those schools who were ready for the challenge of university coursework.



Courses offered will include college-level calculus, biology, sociology, engineering and earth sciences, with up to 35 students in each class. UC San Diego Extension will provide oversight of the curriculum and the instruction as well as ensure course units earned are transferrable at all University of California campuses.

Cheryl Hibbeln, executive director of secondary schools at San Diego Unified School District, said the program is unique because it is the first time a four-year university has provided on-site college instruction. Developed in conjunction with UC San Diego Extension, the courses are designed to encourage San Diego Unified students to continue to challenge themselves, she explained.



“The program is grounded in the notion that academic excellence combined with the opportunity to save time and money is a powerful motivator for high school students to meet college-level expectations,” said Hibbeln. “Students look at UC San Diego as a premier college so to have access to this rigorous coursework before college is very special.”

Abeyta said the program is also designed to deliver on the goals of UC San Diego's Strategic Plan, which identified the need to cultivate a diverse student body while ensuring that education is both easily accessible and affordable.

"This is part of a campus-wide initiative to find new, innovative ways to make attaining a college degree both more efficient and cost effective," Abeyta said. "Our hope is that we can find ways to expand this program to more high schools in the near future."

Reuther agreed the program provides great value to the students he's teaching.

"This class is a nice segue to prepare them for college," he said. "It's a great way to not scare them away but encourage them."

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