

HEWLETT

Leaders in Student Success

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**Four California Community Colleges Named  
“Hewlett Leaders in Student Success”**

*First Annual Program Identifies Criteria for Success in Basic Skills Education*

ANAHEIM, CA, October 2, 2008 – Four California community colleges received state-wide recognition today for their innovative efforts to increase the success of students in basic skills. Columbia College, De Anza College, Santa Barbara City College and Southwestern College were named Hewlett Leaders in Student Success at an educators’ conference, Strengthening Student Success.

The colleges, selected from among 109 California community colleges, are true catalysts for change. Each school has instituted structured and systematic activities that have resulted in measurable improvements in math and English basic skills. These foundational skills are critical for students in an uncertain economy who hope to pursue program certificates, associate degrees, or to transfer to a four-year college.

“The financial climate of the nation has been so tumultuous during the past weeks that reassessing what really matters is top-of-mind for almost everyone. Our nation is looking towards a future where all its citizens have access to the preparation and training they will need to become well-educated, socially conscious and productive members of the global workforce. We must look to our community college system to shoulder a larger responsibility in re-engaging and retraining adults as well as supporting those students whose potential has yet to be tapped,” said Diane Woodruff, Chancellor of the California Community Colleges system.

Community colleges are a crucial gateway to higher education for 11 million students across the nation. California, which has the nation’s largest higher education system, has more than 2.6 million community college students. They comprise an extremely diverse population with a wide range of goals -- from completing college pre-requisites to vocational training.

Basic skills, or “pre-collegiate,” education is designed to help under-prepared students master the skills required for success in transfer-level courses. The need is vast. Every year roughly half a million students arrive at a California community college with the goal of transferring to a four-year college. More than 70 percent are not prepared for the rigors of college work. Many face economic hardship, language barriers, or significant time lags between high school completion and college entry. A recent study showed that the number of students in California who require basic studies support grew 76 percent between 1992 and 2007.

One goal of the Hewlett Leaders in Student Success program is to encourage an exchange of information about successful basic skills strategies between community colleges. Pamela Burdman, Program Officer for Education at the Hewlett Foundation, said, "By recognizing the four colleges today and those in subsequent years, we hope additional colleges will implement new approaches to advance students who need help with basic skills. Further, this work can provide concrete examples and documented success in the improvement of basic skills to policy makers, thus elevating its priority on their agendas."

Experts from across the country contributed to the selection of the 2008 Hewlett Leaders. Data analyses identified strong programs, and visiting teams made site visits to interview faculty and administrators. The program developed criteria for measuring successful progress.

- **Curriculum** aligned and organized for effectiveness
- **Learner-centered** classroom practices
- **Integration** of academic support and student services
- **Equity**, pursued by assessing learning and progress rates by cohort
- **Institutional leadership and support**, reflected in mission, planning, evaluation and investment

The college profiles and student populations of the selected schools are quite different but each school's basic skills programs offer models that are applicable to any school.

**Columbia College** enlisted a campus-wide network of faculty and student services staff to refocus the school's attention to basic skills needs. Their recommendations ranged from X-Reg, a registration event that increases the percentage of new students who take advantage of advising and orientation, to reinforcing writing skills in math classes. Strategies developed for basic skills education have spread across campus, to the benefit of the whole college.

**De Anza's** outstanding Math Performance Success program surrounds its students with academic and student support services. Students in other math classes benefit from strategies validated at MPS. The Math Retention Project increases class and lab hours, uses software that gives students immediate feedback on their work and enables targeted advising. The college puts great emphasis on collecting data to measure student success. The data guide institutional planning and curriculum development.

**Santa Barbara City College** has made serving under-prepared students a top priority. Its "Partnership for Success" program has expanded advising and tutoring and inspired a strong collaboration between academic and student services. Faculty designed the "Gateway to Success" tutoring program for basic skills courses. The impact on success was so strong that Gateway is expanding, with a goal to include 25 percent of all classes offered at the college.

**Southwestern College's** proximity to the Mexican border has focused the school on the imperative has focused the college on the need for of a skilled, bilingual California workforce. Southwestern has strengthened academic support and student services and has transformed English-as-a-Second-Language education. The school's approach to ESL embeds reinforcement

of language skills into every course and aligns vocational training with basic skills education. The Spanish-to-English Child Development program is taught initially in Spanish and then progresses to English as language skills develop. Bilingual instructors also teach sequences in medical and legal office skills, and in electronics.

Dr. Linda Umbdenstock, executive director of Hewlett Leaders in Student Success, stressed the impact these programs make. "These innovative teaching strategies and systemic overhauls in basic education are model programs that are proven to help students build the foundation needed in core subjects. They enable students to gain valuable study skills, as well as connect them with orientation programs, tutoring, counseling, and other student support services that will help them to stay in school and succeed."

Hewlett Leaders in Student Success is administered by the Research and Planning Group of the California Community Colleges and funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. This is the program's inaugural year. The Hewlett Foundation will support the Leaders for Student Success program for two additional years.

For more information, visit [www.HewlettLeadersinStudentSuccess.org](http://www.HewlettLeadersinStudentSuccess.org).

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