Saddleback College and Saddleback Valley Unified School District Partner to Improve College Student Preparedness and Success

Mission Viejo, CA – A landmark partnership plan that helps prepare high school students for the rigors of college has been established by Saddleback College and Saddleback Valley Unified School District (SVUSD). The High School Partnership Program (HSPP) was formally approved through a memorandum of understanding between Saddleback College and SVUSD and will be carried out at all of the district’s high schools (El Toro, Laguna Hills, Mission Viejo, Mira Monte, Silverado, and Trabuco Hills).

HSPP is a comprehensive effort to improve first-year college student preparedness and success. The centerpiece of the program is the Gaucho Guarantee, which states that high school students who follow all of the recommended steps outlined in the plan will have the necessary tools to achieve success whether they seek to attend college, enter the workforce, join the military, or pursue any other pathway after high school. In addition to providing recommended steps for high school students, the HSPP provides suggested roles for the college, high school, and parents or guardians in support of a student’s chosen pathway.

Dr. Tod A. Burnett, president of Saddleback College, said, “This partnership has the potential to be a model program in the state. The HSPP’s comprehensive approach with our local high schools provides students – beginning in their freshman year – with a promising first look at college life to better prepare them to succeed at Saddleback College or in any other chosen pathway.”

SVUSD Board President Dolores Winchell said, "The SVUSD Board is very excited about this partnership with Saddleback College and the college preparation this course can provide for our students. We value our relationship with Saddleback College and appreciate this opportunity to offer this course in all of our comprehensive high schools. Our motto is, ‘Preparing Today’s Students for Tomorrow’s World,’ and this college course offering is available during the regular bell schedule on each high school campus. We are delighted to showcase this model program in SVUSD!"
Students who follow the HSPP’s recommended steps will: 1) Develop a clear understanding of the expectations for attending college; 2) Complete the requirements for preparation to succeed while attending college; 3) Develop study strategies that will enable them to complete college courses; 4) Establish career and academic goals; 5) Complete transferable or basic skills English and math courses; 6) Complete a Saddleback College academic planning or educational and vocational planning course; 7) Complete Saddleback College’s orientation and assessment process; 8) Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); 9) Create an academic plan for their first semester at Saddleback College; and 10) Register for college-ready courses for the fall term.

A report released by the Student Success Task Force of the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office in January 2012 calls for “greater coordination between K-12 schools and community colleges.” This report shows that the biggest indicator of a student’s academic success in college is directly related to skills in English and math. A lack of student preparedness upon entering college is a statewide trend; in 2010, 79 percent of high school juniors in the state who took the Early Assessment Program college readiness test did not test “college ready.” Further, a lack of preparation has a long-term, negative impact on a student’s ability to complete his or her educational goals and succeed in the workplace. A recent Orange County Business Council survey reveals that many employers believe that students are not fully prepared for success in a job or career.

For a copy of the HSPP or additional information, please visit www.saddleback.edu/hspp or contact Leslie Humphrey, director of outreach and recruitment, at (949) 582-4272.

Located in Mission Viejo, Saddleback College provides quality higher education and training to the greater south Orange County community. Having served more than 500,000 students since 1968, Saddleback College offers more than 300 degree and certificate programs to help students reach their personal, career, and educational goals. For more information, please visit www.saddleback.edu.

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