

UCSB Office of Campus Outreach Initiatives
Evaluation Case Study 2002

Fillmore High School

UCSB Partnership School

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Conducted with the support of the
UCSB Chancellor's Outreach Advisory Board (COAB)
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Introduction

Fillmore High School's student population (about 1,000 students) includes a large majority of Latino students (almost 80%), many of whom are English Language Learners (about 20%) and are socioeconomically disadvantaged (about 50%).

The Fillmore partnership located within Ventura County involves schools in one unified school district. Nestled among orchards and farmlands approximately 40 miles southeast of the city of Santa Barbara, Fillmore High School's student population (a total of about 1,000 students) includes a large majority of Latino students (about 80% within the high school), many of whom are English Language Learners (about 20%), are from low socioeconomic backgrounds (almost 50%), and who have parents who are migrant farm workers.



The following descriptive data demonstrates the challenges and strengths to which Fillmore High School and UCSB Outreach must dedicate their resources.

Standardized Testing Data

The following table provides the national percentile rank for the average performance of students in the high school (FHS) compared to students in Ventura County (VC) and students statewide (CA) in the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program. (*Note: Shaded boxes indicate high school rankings lower than the state averages.*)

Fillmore High School 2001															
SAT-9 National Percentile Ranking and Comparisons with District and State															
Grade	Reading			Math			Language			Science			Social Science		
	FHS	VC	CA	FHS	VC	CA	FHS	VC	CA	FHS	VC	CA	FHS	VC	CA
9	26	43	35	46	61	54	42	59	51	39	52	45	35	50	45
10	20	41	33	39	51	47	25	50	41	37	53	45	26	44	38
11	32	44	37	41	54	50	38	55	47	43	53	45	52	62	57

Students in Fillmore High School show lower percentiles than district-wide or statewide rankings across all content areas.

These data indicate that, on average, students within Ventura County score well above the state average on the SAT-9 in all grade levels and across all content areas. Students in Fillmore High School, however, show mean scores approximately two to sixteen percentiles below the state averages across all content areas.

Yet over the last two years, Fillmore High School has made some scoring gains. The following table shows Fillmore High School's 2000 data compared to their 2001 data for the SAT-9 test results. The table displays the change in percentages of students who scored at or above the 50th percentile.

Fillmore High School 2001										
SAT-9 Comparisons 2001 vs. 2000: Percent Scoring At or Above 50 th Percentile										
Grade	Reading		Math		Language		Science		Social Science	
	2001	Change	2001	Change	2001	Change	2001	Change	2001	Change
9	21%	+6	46%	+10	40%	+13	32%	+8	35%	+8
10	18%	-1	39%	+13	21%	0	33%	-1	21%	-1
11	25%	+6	35%	+1	38%	+7	39%	+10	55%	+3

These data demonstrate that student progress in improving scores is inconsistent across content areas and grade levels. The most notable increases were in math and science and for 9th graders. Still, a majority of students remain below the normative score.

On the Academic Performance Index (API) scale of 200 to 1000, Fillmore High School's 2000 Base API was **506**, and their 2001 Growth API was **557** (meaning an increase in 51 points). Since Fillmore High School successfully met their 5% improvement goal (including improvement for students who are socioeconomically disadvantaged), they are eligible to receive the Governor's Performance Award. Fillmore High School's statewide decile rank is a **3**.

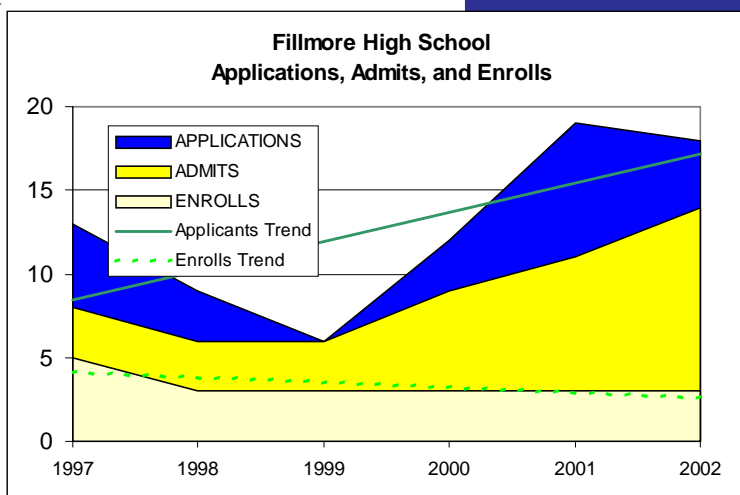
UCSB Admission Data

The graph below illustrates the comparative numbers of Fillmore High School students who have applied to, been admitted to, and enrolled in UCSB from 1997-2002. Trend lines indicate that while enrollment rates have remained fairly consistent, application and admission rates have steadily risen after a sharp decline in 1999. In fact, the number of students admitted in the 2002 Fall Freshman class (14 students) was 27% higher than the previous year (11 students), and FHS's admission rate was 78%, much higher than the overall UCSB Freshmen admission rate for Fall 2002 (51%).

Overall, the descriptive data above demonstrate high poverty rates, historically low standardized testing performances, and low eligibility rates for the students of Fillmore High School. Despite these risk factors, UCSB Outreach, in partnership with the Fillmore High School community, have seen recent gains in performance indices and UCSB admissions. What has contributed to these rebounds in performance—and what more can

Fillmore High School students have made moderate gains in their testing scores over the last two years.

FHS' UCSB admission rate for Fall 2002 (78%) was much higher than the overall UCSB Freshmen admission rate (51%).



Interviews were conducted with 5 Fillmore High School students, 4 teachers, the principal, 2 counselors, an Assistant Superintendent, and the school site coordinator.

be done to continue these positive trends—are the focal points of the interviews conducted with Fillmore High School teachers, counselors, administrators, and students as described in the case study below.

Methodology

In order to share the perspectives of the Fillmore elementary and high school districts' students, teachers, and administrators, interviews were conducted by the Evaluation Coordinator of Campus Outreach Initiatives as well as the Assistant Director of UCSB's School-University Partnerships. Individuals interviewed included:

- 5 high school students
- 1 high school Principal
- 1 high school Counselor
- 1 high school Guidance Advisor
- 4 teachers (including mathematics, science, AVID, and Spanish)
- 1 Assistant Superintendent
- 1 UCSB Outreach Site Coordinator (responsible for middle school and high school outreach activities).

The semi-structured interview protocol included questions about the breadth and adequacy of the UCSB Outreach Programs, the nature of the school-university partnership, outcomes associated with outreach, and goals/expectations for future outreach activities. Overall, the participants shared some unique perspectives about the context of outreach, but recurring themes and issues emerged from the interviews that offer insight into the true character of the partnership, personal experience with outreach activities, and ongoing support for continued collaboration. These trends are described and discussed below.

Findings

How UCSB Outreach Meets Fillmore High School's Needs

Over the last year students, teachers, counselors, and administrators from Fillmore High School have taken advantage of the resources UCSB Outreach program have offered. For example, UCSB School-University Partnerships, Early Academic Outreach, and Office of Campus Outreach Initiatives have sponsored multiple FHS outreach activities during 2001-2002, including: (a) after-school articulation meetings to write departmental course syllabi and quarterly assessments; (b) specialized departmental meetings and professional development opportunities, including a customized staff development writing evaluation; English, Math, and Science Departments

articulation days; Partnership School Principal Meetings hosted at UCSB; Equity in Education Meeting at Poinsettia Pavilion; sponsorship of conference attendance (NCTE in Baltimore, CMC in Palm Springs); the UCSB Academic Writing Partnership (including the Diagnostic Writing Service); Project RENEW; an Algebra Institute; and other California Subject Matter Project events; (c) guest presentations and conferences such as AVID training, “Teaching in the Heterogeneous Classroom” by Jeannie Oakes, “Tools for Teaching” by Fred Jones, “Effective Schools” by Pat Davenport, Jane Schaffer’s Writing Presentation, the Governor’s Secondary Reading Initiative with Rosemary Staley, and an MIT Women’s Initiative; (d) academic development opportunities including workshops and classroom presentations by Jaime Vega, SAT preparation, tutoring, and UCSB campus visits; and (e) an outreach site coordinator to supply college counseling, guidance, application support, and coordination for outreach activities.

Without a doubt, those who participated in the interviews perceived the Fillmore High School outreach site coordinator, Mr. Jaime Vega, as the most valuable and effective of the UCSB outreach offerings. Mr. John Wilber, Fillmore High School Principal, declared the site coordinator to be “the single most significant impact of the whole program.” Mr. Al Arguellas, FHS head counselor, concurred, stating, “[Mr. Vega’s] efforts are amazing. Jaime is available to everyone. He makes classroom presentations, and I don’t think he has missed any class. Everyone here knows him on a first-name basis...He’s a tremendous ambassador for the university.” Assistant Superintendent Jane Kampbell acknowledged that “the single most valuable outcome [of the UCSB Partnership] has been the addition of the UCSB college counselor.” She described Mr. Vega as “a unique individual. We’d like to clone him. He’s dynamic, excited, and connected to the kids.” Ms. Kampbell recounted how the newly-hired Mr. Vega had proved himself almost immediately in the job: within weeks of his employment, he was able to get students denied admission to UCSB re-evaluated and accepted. “Now,” she said, “kids are going to universities where Fillmore never had acceptances before such as Georgetown and Notre Dame.” Most importantly, “What the students believe they can do is *so* much different than our students four to five years ago. Their horizons have broadened.”

Many other FHS staff and students described the multiple ways in which Jaime Vega has impacted the lives of the middle school and high school students and their families, the information and support provided to teachers and counselors, and the college-going culture of the entire Fillmore community. For example, Mr. Epi Torres, FHS Spanish teacher, testified that in his work, Mr. Vega takes students to the UCSB campus, offers SAT workshops, conducts 6-week classes in the summer (focusing on improving vocabulary, increasing study skills, improving

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--Al Arguellas,
FHS Counselor

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--Jane Kampbell,
Assistant Superintendent

“With his ways and his charisma, Jaime [Vega] has done a tremendous job in getting kids to focus on the possibility of university work.”

-- Joe Torres,
FHS AVID
Coordinator

“This school would be in dire straits without Jaime Vega!... He has taken to heart his job. If it wasn't for him, we'd lose a lot of kids motivated to move on.”

-- Gary Rubens,
Science Teacher

test taking abilities, and writing essays), and meets with parents. He also goes into the classrooms and talks to students about the importance of increasing their test-taking and writing skills. Mr. Torres is also aware the Jaime serves the middle school in Fillmore. Mr. Vega has talked to the students there, and Mr. Torres is especially aware of the influence these presentations have had on his daughter. He said, “My daughter is a middle school student, and she is already excited about college. She has goals and plans, and she asks me to review her progress and grades to make sure she is on track for the university system.” He and his wife have raised five children, but “she is the first of the five I’ve heard talk about these plans and the courses she needs to take for UCSB.” He attributes this to Mr. Vega’s work.

While this work in the middle schools is impressive, Jaime Vega’s work in the high school was characterized as nothing short of inspiring. Mr. Joe Torres, FHS AVID Coordinator, said, “with his ways and his charisma, Jaime has done a tremendous job in getting kids to focus on the possibility of university work.” Mr. Torres attributes the success of Mr. Vega’s work to his being “an incentive” to students and parents and to Jaime’s multiple skills and assistance including: bilingual skills, extensive university information, his ability to open minds, the SAT preparatory experts he has brought to campus, and the assistance he provides on applications. Mr. Vega, he said, came to Fillmore High at a time when the district was making a concerted effort to work on increasing test scores, and the English department, AVID, and UCSB played instrumental roles in these efforts. Mr. Torres describes the outreach partnership program, led by the work of Jaime Vega, like “an engine that has been fine-tuned, with the kids’ ability to take off.”

Mr. Gary Rubens, FHS science teacher and MESA advisor, claimed “this school would be in dire straits without Jaime Vega! I tell every student, especially juniors and seniors, to see Jaime to make sure they are on track—no matter whom they’ve already talked to.” He believes that the site coordinator “has taken to heart his job. If it wasn’t for him, we’d lose a lot of kids motivated to move on.” According to Mr. Rubens, Mr. Vega encourages the students to think seriously about their futures, to make suitable plans, to listen to guest speakers, and to gain information about their intended career paths. The students themselves confirm this, and one AVID senior declared, “I knew a lot [about college] already because of AVID, but Mr. Vega was the one that really focused my path. I’m the first one in my family to go to college even though I started in ELD English classes.” Mr. Vega also helped these students to find classes to attend at UCSB or community college that were not offered at their high school, and he helped them to get into AP and honors courses suitable for competitive eligibility to UC. He assisted them with numerous applications: for UCSB and UCLA

summer programs, college applications, and financial aid. He would proofread essays and personal statements for them, even staying late at night to answer last-minute questions. “He’s always there to help. He doesn’t care what time it is,” they said. Of equal importance, the students described the assistance the outreach programs provided their parents in “getting them informed about college.” Parents attended meetings about financial aid and college opportunities. “It really helps for kids whose parents never went to college,” declared one student. Mr. Vega’s work in collaboration with other outreach programs helped the students explain their hard work and late nights doing homework—justifying the time they dedicated to difficult classes and college applications. One young woman explained, “My Dad is conservative,” and he feared his daughter being on her own. Jaime Vega and other outreach staff talked to parents about alleviating those fears, trusting their kids, getting the financial support available to them, and the importance of being involved in numerous activities such as clubs and sports to be competitively eligible for the University of California.

Finally, Mr. Vega has become an integrated member of the high school staff. He attends the staff and counseling meetings, and he updates the school personnel on the students with whom he is working, the students that have been accepted to UC, and the activities of UCSB Outreach. In addition, “Jaime Vega has full access to the school’s database,” FHS Head Counselor Mr. Arguellas explained. “He is on SASI [the student information system], has access to all of the records, and on a regular basis he looks at students’ GPAs and courses. He functions as a regular school counselor.” He and others described how Mr. Vega evaluated students’ transcripts prior to classroom visits to offer them assistance in planning for A-G course completion, providing study skills workshops, developing tutoring programs, and informing them about all of the pathways to college. In fact, Mr. Vega has even provided teachers with information about their own educational opportunities as professionals. He has become an “intermediary” of sorts to continuing professional education. Mr. Epi Torres summed it up as: “Jaime has filled a big gap in the community and in the school with his background and knowledge of UC. He’s a go-getter, a hustler. He’s out there finding the students, beating the bushes. And he’s a real likable person, too, which makes it easy to work with him.”

In addition to the work of the site coordinator, MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement), including the Women in Science and Engineering and the *Los Curanderos* projects, were praised as vital and beneficial math, science, and engineering programs on Fillmore High School’s campus. Gary Rubens, FHS’s MESA Advisor, confirmed, “MESA is terrific and a highly awarded program.” While he has some specific recommendations about improving its alignment with

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--FHS Student

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--Epi Torres,
Spanish Teacher

“[The ‘Research Experience for Teachers’ Program offered by the UCSB Materials Research Laboratory] was the most incredible experience I’ve ever had!”

-- Gary Rubens,
Science Teacher
and MESA Advisor

“The Partnership got us to turn back to [articulation with the middle school]-- to revisit it when we hadn’t done it in a while.”

-- John Wilber,
FHS Principal

the school calendar, in all he was “really thrilled” with MESA. In addition, Mr. Rubens participated in the UCSB RET (Research Experience for Teachers) program offered through the Materials Research Laboratory and claimed that this was “the most incredible experience I’ve ever had! That would be valuable for students!” He encouraged more funding to be allocated to intensive, experiential programs such as RET for the student populations to be exposed to university professors, lab technicians, and more experience with lab equipment. These activities would be “big motivators” for them he believes. Mr. Rubens acknowledged the extraordinary work of Dr. Fiona Goodchild of the RET program and Mr. Bob Cota of MESA who had been instrumental in his exciting work with UCSB.

Finally, the professional development opportunities provided through UCSB’s School-University Partnerships (SUP) program were also mentioned as effective and accommodating by some of the participating teachers and administrators. Especially recognized were the Academic Writing Partnership, administered by UCSB staff Dr. Heather Horn, and the mathematics institutes and inservices delivered by Ms. Maria Guzman, Director of the Tri-Counties Math Project, and Ms. Kelley Baeza, Assistant Director of SUP. The Academic Writing Partnership provides support and instruction in academic reading and writing skills. Writing Program faculty visit Fillmore High School classrooms one day per week as guest presenters and co-teachers, and they provide instructional support for the administration of the Diagnostic Writing Service Practice Subject A exam. Mr. Wilbur, FHS Principal, called this project a “powerful, concrete, and specific” intervention that the teachers and students have found extremely useful in the classroom. The immediate quantitative feedback they receive from the Subject A scores is also very helpful in the school’s analysis of their achievement. Simultaneously, Ms. Guzman and Baeza, in collaboration with Ms. Nancy Terman, Director of Project RENEW, an NSF-funded mathematics leadership project, provided numerous opportunities for articulation days, a meeting on educational equity, an Algebra institute, and support for other professional development activities. Reflecting on these supports, Mr. Wilber, Fillmore High School Principal, said that he believes due to Fillmore’s unified school district, the school has “a climate of discussion and relationship with the middle school.” He asserted that UCSB has helped FHS to capitalize on this, declaring “The Partnership got us to turn back to that—to revisit it when we hadn’t done it in a while.” The linkage with UCSB Outreach, he said, “revived the formalized discussions and encouraged us to return to articulation work on curriculum.” One clear and strong message that Mr. Wilber learned from his early involvement with the Partnership was a basic thing: *Kids have to take Algebra during their freshman year.* This simple directive led to an increase in students completing Algebra in the middle school, which had ramifications to the master schedule of the

high school. He said that the Partnership played a major role in examining Algebra and AVID grades 7-12 articulation in Fillmore, concomitantly supporting the school's obligations to their AP Challenge Grant.

How the Fillmore High School-University Partnership is Characterized

When asked about the nature of the partnership between UCSB and Fillmore High School, Ms. Jane Kampbell, Assistant Superintendent of the Fillmore Unified School District, had much upon which to reflect since she was highly involved in the original formation and negotiations of the Fillmore-UCSB Partnership. Ms. Kampbell declared that she believed the school and UCSB have shared equal authority. "I felt I could have a heart to heart with Tom [Ostwald, Director of UCSB School-University Partnerships] and let him know when UC was overstepping their bounds." She admitted that there were some disagreements in the early days of partnership negotiations: "Fillmore's pressure and direction from the State Department of Education was philosophically in a different direction than the university's," Ms. Kampbell recognized. Therefore, there were times when she had to discuss with UCSB outreach staff the alignment of their offered professional development activities and these State requirements. She felt obligated to tell them, "I am worried about this staff development because our focus is on standards and the three R's. While we greatly appreciate the staff development opportunities, I don't want my teachers unduly influenced by a point of view that is not subscribed to by the State." Standards and testing, she said, is the "name of the game." In time, Ms. Kampbell believes, she and Tom Ostwald came to an understanding about how Fillmore was "regulated" and had to "abide by the rules and pressures from the Department of Education, the School Board, and parents." "We couldn't," she said, "just jaunt off in experimental stuff." So they deliberated ways that Fillmore could tap into what the university could offer, fit both of the institutions' needs, and mutually respect each other's constraints.

In sum, Ms. Kampbell ruminated on the change in the relationship between Fillmore and UCSB as a result of their partnership efforts. "Before the Partnership," she said, "there were misunderstandings, misconceptions, misstatements, and mistrust between the university and the district." For example, researchers at the university had published information about Fillmore's dropout rate based on calculations that did not take into consideration a number of variables. Most critically they neglected to factor in the aspect that re-classification of 9th graders does not occur until the students have completed high school credits. Therefore, data collected before the end of the school year is often misinterpreted because the 9th grade class enrollment is much larger than 12th grade enrollment (it contains both the incoming 9th grade and

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-- Jane Kampbell,
Assistant
Superintendent,
reflecting on her
experiences with the
Partnership

transitioning 9th grade students). The university’s misuse of these data in public venues caused a great deal of trouble and frustration for the district, leading to a tense relationship between the institutions. Yet in their work with the Partnership, the district was able to learn valid things from the data analyses conducted by UCSB’s School-University Partnerships and brought to their attention that “were really eye opening,” Ms. Kampbell declared. Without regular communication, Ms. Kampbell acknowledged that many negative assumptions were made. One especially strong myth was that “UCSB never accepts ‘our kids.’” But according to Ms. Kampbell, through the years of committed work toward common goals, the Partnership has “led to a relationship that is beneficial to both the university and Fillmore Unified School District. There is trust and collegiality now.” In fact, on a personal note, Ms. Kampbell believes that the “series of events, the people I got to know, and the discussions we had broadened my own view and better understanding of the university’s focus.”

Similarly, Principal Wilber recounted the history of the UCSB Partnership with Fillmore High School. He said that when he was asked about three years ago to participate, it “sounded too good to be true.” He knew that UCSB was engaging in aggressive outreach services with schools that met the “underperforming” criteria. His reaction was, “What? They want to *give* us money and *help* us?” He described his attitude as “guarded optimism,” just until the school received its first purchase order, as promised, for supplies. UCSB Outreach provided “an immediate shot in the arm to dreary budget areas” including ample staff development funding (compared to the insufficient funds provided through the 1882 funds of \$10,000—amounting to just about \$200 per teacher). In all, Mr. Wilber recognized that the relationship with UCSB Outreach is one of support, saying “They support you with things you are doing that are working.” In addition, he recognized that UCSB was adept at asking critical questions that helped FHS to examine the outcomes of their existing programs (e.g., “What are you getting for results?”). This helped them to establish more effective programs that increased the likelihood of their students achieving UC eligibility. The university’s “research-based mindset” was beneficial to the school, he believes, because it helped them to articulate *why* and *what* worked for their students and teachers. While UCSB challenged them, they offered their support for effective and relevant practices in their community. The coordination of the program was viewed as a “true partnership” in his mind because “not a lot of strings are attached.” The support and the funding is unconditional—not what Fillmore is “normally used to!” Furthermore, the principles of the Partnership, primarily UC’s goals of equity and access, fit well into the district’s goals to explore equity issues, Mr. Wilber affirmed. The Partnership was well timed and synchronized with their growing awareness and interest in these critical issues. They

assisted Fillmore in examining their UC-adopted course lists, for example. Having done that, Fillmore realizing that Sheltered Algebra was not among the included college preparatory classes, leading to a thorough examination and revamping of their approved course offerings.

Other individuals interviewed had similar perceptions about the benefits of the Fillmore-UCSB Partnership. For example, Gary Rubens, Fillmore High School science teacher and MESA Advisor, affirmed his belief that the Partnership is not only helpful but critical for school reform and student improvement. “With proper oversight, Fillmore High School *can* provide for the needs of all students. You clearly see that I firmly believe that UCSB is an important source to provide opportunities for some very deserving kids... These kids have so much potential that is not utilized. That is why we need UC here.” But, Mr. Rubens cautioned, UCSB should have strict standards by which they hold their partner school accountable. These standards might include, he proposed: required monthly meetings, agreements for pre- and post-testing, elimination of non A-G courses in the master schedule, prioritization for students whose goal is college/who are college bound. In fact, to support the prioritization and focus on college-bound students at the high school, Mr. Rubens suggested a restructuring of the entire enrollment process: students with higher GPAs should be slated for their first choices in their class schedules. He believes this would help the school move toward an “outcome-oriented” framework centered around the students’ life goals.

In sum, Principal Wilber affirmed that, through the Partnership, UCSB has helped Fillmore to “provide a climate of collegiality and professionalism” by asking hard questions about their programs and course offerings. The encouragement and transformation has prompted other administrators and teachers to examine their practices, and Mr. Wilber is even interested in knowing what other partnership schools around the state are doing to promote best practices. While both he and Ms. Kampbell were skeptical at first, they soon enough came to understand that the Partnership could assist both institutions with their challenges and overlapping goals. Since then, Ms. Kampbell recognized that the district and UCSB have come to “an understanding about the support and direction the university could provide—and how [Fillmore Unified] felt they were willing to receive the support.” The outreach work with Fillmore has been, in Ms. Kampbell’s opinion “a glowing example of a beneficial partnership to students and schools.”

Outcomes Attributed to UCSB Outreach Activities

Counselors, teachers, students, and administrators at Fillmore High attributed a number of achievements to the investment of time and opportunities provided by UCSB Outreach in partnership with the

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FHS Head
Counselor

school. First and foremost, Ms. Olivia Palacio, FHS Career Guidance Advisor, “sees more students wanting more information on UC.” In addition, she has noticed that teachers are cooperative and “let us have class time” to devote to college and career preparation; she, as well, feels that her own expectations are higher for students. Mr. Rubens, the science teacher, concurred, testifying that he has seen an increase in the awareness level of students and teachers toward UC requirements and a willingness of teachers to recommend UCSB directly to students. The teachers allow more class time to be devoted to the discussion of higher education programs and the opportunities available at UCSB, Mr. Rubens explained. Mostly, both Ms. Palacio and Mr. Rubens attributes these accomplishments to the increased accessibility of information and services to the community, ushered by Jaime Vega.

Mr. Al Arguellas, FHS Head Counselor, believes the success of the UCSB Partnership effort is evidenced by “the measurable growth in the number of Fillmore High School students who have taken the SAT and are UC eligible.” He cited statistics including over 100 students who took the SAT, and he said this is “the largest number I can ever recall!” Mr. Arguelles described the advisement and promotion of the PSAT/SAT test preparation workshops as “amazing,” and he attributes the increase in SAT scores to UCSB’s work. In fact, he has been personally affected by the outreach efforts: he had a senior daughter last year that did not do well on one portion of her SAT. He encouraged her to take UCSB’s workshop, and she increased her score by 250 points! This assistance was “invaluable” to his daughter, as is his personal testimony to other students about how the workshops “can and do work.” Additionally, Mr. Arguellas believes that course rigor has increased at Fillmore High. As head counselor, he has worked with Jaime Vega to update their list of UC-eligible courses. “Jaime has really pushed me,” he declared, to discuss the development of new courses and to get additional courses approved. Furthermore, Mr. Arguellas said, “the words ‘competitively eligible’ are now in my vocabulary.” He has witnessed more students selecting enrollment in honors and AP classes as a result of their newfound knowledge about college acceptance. The students themselves attested to these outcomes, too, saying they had seen an improvement in their English and math abilities. The SAT workshops helped them to increase their vocabulary and comfort with the tests, they confirmed, and all teachers now focus on the SAT vocabulary words in all of their classes.

Mr. Vega acknowledge many outreach efforts responsible for “very dramatic” changes at Fillmore, including Ms Curiel’s math classes, SAT review workshops, the articulation and professional development occurring in the math and English classes, the dispensing of the Tooth and Nail novel (focusing on SAT vocabulary words in context), and

AVID courses. To his own credit, too, Mr. Vega enumerated numerous positive outcomes including:

- An increase in the number of students receiving SAT scores of 1,000 or above from last year (n=11) to this year (n=25), and an increase in the number of perfect scores on the SAT tests
- An increase in mean GPAs
- An increase in Honors Club, MESA, and mock trial membership
- An increase in the number of students receiving Governor's scholarships, and an increase in the number of applications to the Ventura County Scholarship Foundation
- An increase in the number of students attending community college assessment presentations
- An increase in the number of students *and parents* enrolling in colleges
- An increase in the number of teachers returning to higher education
- An increase in the accessibility of classrooms to outreach staff

Mr. Vega said, "The community has really bought into it." They have invited Mr. Vega to community-wide events including the recent 20/20 Vision event at Fillmore's City Hall. Also, the school district recently celebrated "University Week" when the superintendent asked all faculty and staff to wear their alumni shirts from their universities and to speak about their college. Furthermore, Mr. Vega described other critical outcomes:

- An increase in the number of community college classes offered as 6th period on the high school campus
- An increase in the number of students who attained competitive eligibility and were accepted to private schools
- An increase in the students' sense of belonging and self esteem

As a result, Mr. Vega said that the students are now declaring, "We have options." They are the first to pave the road for their siblings, he explained. Thus, he predicted that the students now in middle school will surpass what these current high school students have done. There are still myths, however, about going to college (e.g., it costs too much or the students are 'not ready'), but in all, Mr. Vega believes that "we're making history!" Buy-in has been established, he confirmed, and the administration, superintendent, and supportive environment of UCSB's Early Academic Outreach Program are all contributing to this historical collaboration.

Fillmore administrators agreed, attesting to the significant increases in the UC-eligible student pool and an increase in the college-going culture of the school. Assistant Superintendent Kampbell claimed that Jaime Vega's work has helped to "change the climate of the school to an academic university-bound focus." She does not believe that "we are *there* yet, but I can certainly see a difference at the high school. The connection with the university helps us to get there, particularly with

Fillmore High School has seen increases in SAT scores, GPAs, scholarship awards, students attaining competitive eligibility, and students *and adults* going on to higher education.

"The students are now declaring 'We have options!'"
-- Jaime Vega,
FHS Site Coordinator

Fillmore High School has also seen increases in State testing scores, in staff participation in professional development activities, in staff's expectations for their students, and in parent involvement.

“[The Partnership] has powerful examples to fuel [students’] futures and give a positive spin and momentum to help turn the corner from negative to positive.”

**-- John Wilber,
FHS Principal**

girls.” In addition, Ms. Kampbell attributed the cultural change to the work of the AVID program and the university’s support, plus the connections the school as made as a result of the partnership, such as the ENLACE grant (an initiative funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to support and advance the development of educational pathways for Latino students), which focuses on families within the Fillmore district. She and Principal Wilber each cited numerous additional accomplishments including:

- Increases in high school teachers’ and community members’ expectations
- Improved instructional strategies
- Increase in State testing scores (a gain on the Academic Performance Index of 51 points)
- Increase in participation in staff development activities such as the Subject Matter Projects
- Increase in communication between the university and Fillmore’s teaching staff and the administration
- Increase in the involvement of parents and the Future Leaders of America organization within the community

Engaging the Future Leaders of America organization into the outreach efforts, according to Ms. Kampbell, assisted children and parents in understanding better the educational system and the importance of pursuing higher education. FLA’s focus on parent involvement is critical, she believes, and she knows “several people whose lives were changed because of attending FLA.” The experiences increased the parents’ and children’s empowerment, Ms. Kampbell said, leading to parents pursuing their GEDs—setting an example for their children that “you never are too old to pursue your education, and education is a high priority in the family.” Mr. Wilber recognized that Jaime Vega’s classroom visits and one-on-one conversations with parents also contributed to an increase in parent involvement and understanding that “UC wants your kids.” Mr. Wilber emphasized that is it still important for UCSB to work on bridging parents’ reservations about their poverty and low-wage, migrant employment with their children’s potential to study at the university. Yet, due to the success of some students, the Partnership has “powerful examples to fuel their futures and give a positive spin and momentum to help turn the corner from negative to positive,” added Principal Wilber.

Additional Suggestions for Improvement of UCSB Outreach Activities

Despite the positive outcomes achieved so far in Fillmore, there is still admittedly much work to be done. Just about all participants in the case study interviews made recommendations to improve the logistics, publicity, scope, and/or intensity of outreach services in Fillmore.

While Mr. Jaime Vega appreciates the support of his colleagues, he

recognized the need for numerous other resources. For example, according to Mr. Vega, there is need for more money to provide transportation to outreach events such as campus visits—and more opportunities to bring more students *and their parents* to campus for overnight stays. In addition, workspace and clerical assistance is a disputed issue at Fillmore High School. Constantly, staff (including counselors and probation officers) struggle to find appropriate places on campus for confidential meetings with students and parents. Mr. Vega additionally said that he could desperately use an assistant or intern to help him with student communications (e.g., reminder slips) and with logistics planning for outreach events. Furthermore, the availability of technology is limited in students' homes, and there is a critical need for more tutors and academic teachers' aides in the classrooms. Mr. Vega also recommended that the school counselors could use support in their own efforts to review transcripts for UC eligibility. He suggested that UCSB Outreach send all of the high school counselors with him to the UC Counselor's Conference to clarify and correct the methods used to review transcripts for college preparatory eligibility and competitiveness. The counselors could also benefit from release time with the teachers to plan and be better informed about the UC/CSU requirements. Their caseloads are high, yet they are never included in the release days for professional development, he explained. Mr. Vega commented much on the stress and strain of the teaching job at Fillmore, and he strongly supported additional release time to assist them in planning field trips and curriculum development. In addition, Mr. Vega would like to see more emphasis on parent involvement, with financial aid workshops offered multiple times.

The students who participated in the interviews also had clear and constructive suggestions to improve outreach service at Fillmore. The students thought that more college tutors were needed in their AVID classes, and they would like FHS to host college fairs on campus with more variety in the schools that are represented (not just community colleges)—such as private schools. In addition, they recommended that more visits to the university be offered to juniors, and AP students should have a homework center that could offer them assistance before school and after school. Finally, they need workshops and information that will assist them with the AP on-line courses that suffer from a lack of technological support.

In contrast, Mr. Arguellas, FHS Head Counselor, disclosed his concern that, in UCSB's effort to "open the minds and the worlds of kids" through university experiences such as field trips, the programs have bred a familiarity that in some sense has backfired. Campus visits are offered so often through the course of their middle school and high school experiences that, by the students' senior years, some have been

Jaime Vega sees a need for additional campus visits for students *and their parents*, more workspace and clerical support, increases in teacher and counselor release time, and multiple financial aid workshops for parents.

FHS students want more college tutors in their AVID classes, college fairs with a variety of schools represented, an AP homework center, and AP on-line course support.

“The students feel like they have ‘seen it, been there.’ They want to be in a different environment or go farther away from home [than UCSB].”

**-- Al Arguellas,
FHS Head
Counselor**

to campus seven or eight times. Thus, “even with a record number of students accepted, unfortunately most are not going to UCSB,” he said. Despite Mr. Vega’s assistance on their applications and other outreach efforts, most students have chosen UCLA, Davis, or Berkeley. “The students feel like they have ‘seen it, been there.’ They want to be in a different environment or go farther away from home,” he declared. Ms. Palacio, the Career Guidance Counselor, recognized the need for additional transportation funding for outreach events, but also offered her opinion that job shadowing is “the number one thing that gets kids into college.” Ms. Palacio has arranged for students to visit the local hospital and shadow the hospital administrators, for example. These programs can lead to paid internship positions for interested students. She suggested, “Kids have to see it. I believe that if you *take* the students to the event, they get more out of it than if you *bring* things here to the high school.” She cited research studies that demonstrated a relationship between students who have job shadowed or interned and higher standardized test scores—clear evidence that such activities are critical to outreach efforts. In addition, Ms. Palacio confirmed that Fillmore “did a survey and found that grades went up, attendance increased, and the dropout rate declined.” With a majority of juniors and seniors participating, hands-on programs like Ms. Palacio’s may increase yield at UCSB if the students are given the opportunity to participate in innovative and appealing experiences on the campus that engage them in university work.

Other Fillmore teachers had additional suggestions centered on teacher professional development and articulation opportunities. Mr. Joe Torres, FHS AVID Coordinator, encouraged UCSB to work on “getting teachers to be on the same page.” For example, he posited that all teachers should have a consistent commitment to incorporating SAT preparation in to their curriculum by focusing on a few SAT questions a day. In addition, their curriculum needs to be “AVID-tized” across the disciplines so that all teachers make a commitment to emphasize writing. Finally, Mr. Torres recognized the high staff turnover rate from which FHS suffers as young, energetic teachers leave their positions after just two to three years; thus, teacher preparation and retention are key areas to address. Mr. Rubens, FHS science teacher, offered a critical albeit abrasive explanation: UCSB Outreach, he asserted, must fight complacency, newness, and lack of innovation in the classroom. Despite that, Mr. Rubens envisioned a comprehensive articulation plan for curriculum development from the 3rd grade through to high school so that all teachers would know what to expect from their students and have standards-based guidance. Instead, there have been “no meetings, discussions, or communication at all,” Mr. Rubens documented. Course placement has been “purely counselor-driven” without placement pretests—which Mr. Rubens recommended for earth science, chemistry, physics, and geometry for more accurate placement opportunities.

Sadly, though, he stated, “we don’t even articulate in our own school.”

Ms. Isabel Curiel, FHS math teacher, concurred, stating that articulation with the middle school has been attempted but without success. “We try, but the math department chairperson at the middle school said that they didn’t have time to get together with us. He believes that they have a system in place, and everything is working fine, so articulation with the high school teachers would be a waste of time. They don’t want to leave their classrooms.” Her own colleagues also don’t see the advantage or relevance in teacher mentorship or articulation efforts supported by UCSB Outreach. “They feel it’s a waste of time,” she claimed. In fact, “They shut the door in my face” when Ms. Curiel attempted to engage them in team teaching (using her preparatory period as the teacher liaison to UCSB outreach efforts). “They don’t take advantage of the opportunity of having a colleague in their classroom. Instead, they ask me to proctor a test. They don’t want their students to see another point of view,” Ms. Curiel declared. Much of the challenge may come from the fact that the new teachers are not credentialed, and many do not have math degrees. Other disciplines, she believes, have faced similar obstacles. In order to improve the success of these articulation efforts, Ms. Curiel suggested that School-University Partnerships and the Subject Matter Projects offer more workshops—perhaps in collaboration with FHS’s English department. Due to a lack of communication across departments, Ms. Curiel also suggested that UCSB publicize their outreach events much more at the beginning of the school year. Her principal Mr. Wilber agreed wholeheartedly, repeating his oft-cited suggestion that UCSB create a Master Outreach Calendar including the major events and activities of outreach amid the school’s testing and event calendar. For example, the Annual Parent Meeting in August, the SAT Workshops in September, and the administration of the SAT-9 in October would be included. He would like to see the whole outreach activity list formalized so that the entire year could be mapped out with strategic plans for delivering and promoting the services more effectively. Mr. Wilber affirmed that coordination with the schools’ calendars would greatly help the principals in their work, and it would be critical to get the calendar into the hands of parents.

Mr. Arguellas, FHS Counselor, contributed additional comments on articulation efforts—confirming that there is “room for improvement, but Jaime [Vega] has put together a bridge-type program.” He described the summer course for incoming 9th graders that Mr. Vega initiated to assist students in making the adjustment. In addition, the site coordinator has also started a tutoring program where high school students are released one hour per week to work with students in the middle school. Mr. Arguelles believes that these are great accomplishments and demonstrate the cooperation Mr. Vega has

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-- Isabel Curiel,
FHS Math Teacher

“Teachers need to be more aware of equity issues. Don’t lower expectations. Make the students in sheltered classes work hard, and keep expectations high. Push them to their potential.”

-- Isabel Curiel,
FHS Math Teacher

achieved with the teachers (who allow the students to go to the middle school). However, Mr. Vega himself described the program as quite burdensome to set up. Often, Jaime would be overlooked, and the staff at the middle school would claim, “Oh, we forgot you!” when meetings were scheduled to occur. He attributed this to the counselor being overburdened with a high ratio of students on his caseload—a fact Assistant Superintendent Kampbell verified. In fact, Ms. Kampbell said her “number one wish” would be for a dedicated college counselor in the middle school to improve articulation and to “hit the kids and parents at an early age.” Currently, she said, “our middle school counselor can just touch on that. There are 900 kids at the school.”

According to Ms. Curiel, another problem on which the outreach programs need to focus attention includes the misplacement of 8th grade students in 9th grade courses. Most of the middle school teachers appear to make proper placement recommendations for their students, she affirmed, but the high school counselors make mistakes or have lower expectations of the students’ abilities. Ms. Curiel firmly believes that “teachers need to be more aware of equity issues. Don’t *lower* expectations. Make the students in sheltered classes work hard, and keep expectations high. Push them to their potential. I was the first to do that,” she stated. Similarly, Ms. Curiel believes that the school “needs to work on the college-going culture, especially in the sheltered classes.” Those students, she asserts, see themselves as going to community college even though they might have the grades to get into a four-year university. They, as well as their parents, need more information including financial aid and scholarship information. In fact, Mr. Rubens suggested that UCSB sponsor a full time outreach funding/scholarship coordinator. Citing the example of a Fillmore High School student accepted to Harvard (but not going), he stated that financial obligations of higher education may be overwhelming to families—forcing kids “who make the grades to have to *settle*.” The potential for the community to collaborate in these efforts is high: biotechnology firms in the area might be able to offer internships (with science credit for lab work), part-time jobs, and scholarships to high-achieving students. “This community is moving up, and housing prices are soaring,” he said. “This place needs to be taken over and re-worked.” Mr. Rubens believes the high school overhaul needs to include a reform in administrators’ and teachers’ attitudes including: never accepting bad grades, getting “tough” with the students, and making Fillmore High School the “Harvard of the west coast.” In sum, Mr. Rubens strongly advocated that we continue to move forward with ambitious reform goals in our outreach programs. Another innovative recommendation he promoted was that UCSB should support a “parent articulation program.” He believes that “parents need to be in control—take this place over before the State does!” To initiate such a program, he recommended that we gather together the better students with good

ideas to share, implement local events including inter-school competitions and guest speakers, and reach out to parents who have not been historically involved. To support this idea structurally, he suggested that we develop a student/parent partnership council so that the students and parents would have more say in the school's reform efforts, management, and accountability mechanisms.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges and grueling work ahead for the Partnership, there was an indisputable affirmation of the Fillmore students' potential and their families' strengths among all of those individuals interviewed at Fillmore High School. To capitalize upon these community assets, Fillmore administrators recommended that UCSB Outreach uphold two critical tenets: early intervention and long-term commitment.

Assistant Superintendent Kampbell reflected on her enduring belief that “getting children college-ready happens almost at birth.” To truly be effective, she asserted, UCSB must start their efforts in kindergarten and first grade—especially with parents. The focus of the message should be “[College] can happen for your child, and money is *not* an obstacle.” Then outreach programs should demonstrate ways that the parents can encourage their children along this path and with this mindset. Thus, she believes, the “K-5 piece is missing” in our outreach efforts. In middle class families with educated parents, she said, parents talk to their children about college and university when they are very little—at age three. It is a given, and there is “no other road.” These high expectations must be upheld in the families of Fillmore along all socioeconomic levels, she declared. “We’ve made a difference for a lot of kids,” Ms. Kampbell asserted, “but we still lose some kids before middle school. If they had a dream, we’d have even more kids going to college.”

The realization of these dreams must be viewed as a long-term investment in the community; however, without shortcuts or undue limitations. While pondering on the outcomes promoted by UCSB Outreach to date, Principal Wilber was reminded of his taking over the varsity coach position at Fillmore High a number of years back. The principal at that time told him, “It will take you three years to turn the program around,” (despite Mr. Wilber’s initial enthusiasm that he would turn it around in one year). The concept of this long-term commitment (of three years) has “really hit home.” He now recognizes that over time, students who were freshmen and sophomores when the outreach partnership was initiated, are now graduating and achieving eligibility at greater rates. While they immediately enjoyed a “honeymoon period” with outreach—witnessing a dramatic increase in their SAT-9 scores

“Getting children college-ready happens almost at birth.”

-- Jane Kampbell,
Assistant
Superintendent

**“We will, just now,
see the fruits of our
labors [from
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-- John Wilber,
FHS Principal

after the first year, Mr. Wilber knows that it is critical to look at what is working to maintain those gains and to stay invested for the long term. “We will, just now, see the fruits of our labors,” he believes, after these three years of intensive investment. To sustain these changes, administrators in Fillmore have hoped for continued outreach funding; but most importantly, they have recognized the need to work with UCSB to encourage a commitment to excellence and to systemic school reform by changing the culture of the community and the classroom.



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