Parents get the scoop on Cabrillo’s transfer program

By ROSEANN HERNANDEZ

APTOS — Faculty and administrators from the Cabrillo Honors Transfer Program made their pitch to the Pajaro Valley Unified School District’s best and brightest at an enchilada dinner Friday night, highlighting the five-year-old program’s benefits in an attempt to get college-bound students to consider going the community-college-then-transfer route upon graduation.

Called Noche de Padres, the evening presentation was well attended — parents and younger siblings filled the hilltop conference room.

One by one, speakers touted the program’s key features: small class sizes, faculty mentors, enriched and more challenging curriculum in a variety of subjects, dedicated honors counselors, special activities, a strong support network and an almost guaranteed spot at the state or UC of your choice as a transfer student.

But it was the potential cost savings that raised the most eyebrows in the room—between $22,000 to $45,000 for a bachelor’s degree when compared to attending all four years at a CSU or UC.

“There is a lot of pressure at high school to go straight to university — not just to go to Cabrillo,” said Carolyn Jackson, Director of Articulation and Honors Transfer Program.

“Yet even with financial aid, it is still expensive and most professions require more than a four-year degree. You can exhaust all your financial aid by the time you get to graduate school.”

Jackson’s own daughter, who is graduating from UC Berkeley in June, went to Cabrillo for her first two years of college and then transferred to the university as a junior, saving the family close to $50,000.

Designed for high-achieving university-ready students, the program is also a way for undocumented students with the right GPA to leverage newly available financial aid resources.

For the first time this year, 540 students, named after a California bill that makes certain undocumented students eligible to pay in-state tuition — were able to apply for state-funded financial aid such as Cal Grants.

They are still not able to apply for federal financial aid, so by going to a community college for two years instead of going straight to a UC or CSU, AB 540 students would theoretically be able to stretch their state and institutional aid, which they were eligible to apply for starting in 2012, a lot farther at a community college.

They did a marvelous job recruiting and giving kids the opportunity to go to a four-year university,” said Rodriguez.

“Some of my brightest are here.”