College and Career Night wraps up county awareness week

Thousands attend Cabrillo’s annual college fair

By Kara Guzman
kaguzman@santacruzsentinel.com
@karambutan on Twitter

APTOS » For the first time, Santa Cruz County schools, Cabrillo College, UC Santa Cruz and others collaborated to create a week of activities centered on a single issue: how to prepare local youth for eventual careers.

College Awareness week, organized by Cabrillo and Santa Cruz County College Commitment (S4C) began Oct. 25 with a UCSC campus open house, followed by college workshops at local high schools and middle schools.

The week culminated with Cabrillo’s College and Career Night on Monday, a fair attended by thousands of county teenagers and parents.

A high school diploma is not enough and students need to have an exit plan, said Ray Kaupp, S4C executive director.

“The place they need to be headed is with some idea of what they want to do with their lives and the education its going to take,” Kaupp said.

Student Preparedness

California students are entering college unprepared, according to a March 2011 legislative analyst office report, which showed the majority of CSU freshmen requiring remediation classes.

At UC, 35 percent of freshmen from Santa Cruz County schools did not meet entry-level writing requirements in 2013, according to UC data. At Cabrillo, the percentage grows, with two-thirds of students entering in 2013 requiring some form of remediation, according to Kristin Fabos, campus spokesperson.

At Cabrillo, whether a student requires remediation is determined by first-year math and English placement exams. What keys success, said Dennis Bailey-Fougnier, vice president of Student Services, is course loads filled with math and English each year in high school.

“Whether that means taking an extra class, or doing some homework, doing an after-school math class — those kind of things are important no matter what you do,” he said. “The more math and English you can do, the better off you are.”

To ensure successful placement exams, students need to choose rigorous coursework throughout high school, said Peggy Pughe, Aptos High assistant principal. As part of college awareness week, she helped organize visits from college representatives, counseling and financial workshops and a college sweatshirt day.

“If you’re not challenging yourself, it’s hard to keep those skills up unless you’re in a class,” said Pughe.

Student Exposure

In a packed Cabrillo library Monday night, Dylan Morrish, Cypress High senior, talked to computer science faculty about his goal of attending Cabrillo next fall, transferring and possibly becoming a software engineer. To prepare, he said he’s learning computing languages online in his free time and may take a hardware class next semester at Cabrillo.

Along with his mother, Dylan asked questions about which classes to take, which degrees to pursue and how to ensure placement in introductory courses.

Outside, Noemi Murillo, Pajaro Valley High freshman, listened to a migrant counselor from her school explain the layout of the gymnasium, where 60 college representatives were waiting. Noemi, 14, and her parents were one of around 15 Pajaro Valley families who rode a chartered bus from Watsonville to attend the event.

Her father, Albert Guzman, a mechanic in a Watsonville strawberry packing plant, said he wants to prepare his family for college early, and plans to visit Fresno State later this month.

“The more informed we get, the earlier it’s going to be,” Guzman said.

Noemi said last year she received mostly D’s and F’s, but this semester she has 3 A’s and a B.

“I know I’m going to college,” she said. “That’s new this year. I think differently now.”