



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Paul Feist

Office: 916.327.5353

Cell: 209.670-6240

Office E-mail: pfeist@cccoco.edu

California Community Colleges Board of Governors bestow 2011 Exemplary Programs awards to Cosumnes River College and Santa Ana College

Chancellor Jack Scott praises winners for focus on enabling success for first-year students

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott today said that Cosumnes River College and Santa Ana College are models of what can be done for students when community colleges engage them and help them stay on course and reach their academic goals. The two colleges were honored Tuesday by the California Community Colleges Board of Governors for winning the 2011 Exemplary Programs awards. De Anza College and Norco College each received honorable mentions.

“Cosumnes River’s freshman seminar program has grown each year and studies have shown that those freshmen who take the three-unit transferrable class stay in school through completion at a much higher rate than those who do not,” Chancellor Scott said. “Santa Ana’s freshman experience and its learning communities have helped more than 8,000 students over its 16-year history and the faculty benefit from the increased collaboration, too. I’m proud of these colleges, as well De Anza and Norco colleges.”

The Freshman Seminar program at Sacramento’s Cosumnes River College is designed to address the high drop-out rates of new and at-risk students. What started out as a one-unit experimental class is now a successful three-unit transferable course. A collaboration between student services and instruction, the seminar has served more than 600 students. The highly interactive course focuses on helping new students, primarily those just coming out of high school, to transition to college life. Because of the seminar, the performance gaps between ethnic, gender and age groups are closing. Data shows that students who complete the seminar enrolled in more units, achieved higher or comparable GPAs, and stay enrolled at higher rates (82 percent) than new students who did not take the seminar. This program is at the forefront of the college’s efforts to improve academic success rates of new and at-risk students.

In the Freshman Experience/Learning Communities program at Santa Ana College, students work in cohorts for two sequential classes in English or math and counseling and are team-taught by a member of the English or mathematics faculty and a counselor. This 16 year-old program is ingrained on the Southern California campus and has brought many benefits to more than 8,000 students and 150 faculty members. The program has decreased drop-out rates and increased pass rates and progress in associate degree attainment and transfer to four-year colleges. The program also has reportedly improved the campus climate and departmental relations as the student success rates have steadily improved.

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De Anza College earned an honorable mention for its First-Year Experience program that links academic support and student services. In just four years, students who take the program have a success rate (passing classes with a C or better) of 84 percent. That's eight points better than the overall college average.

Norco College received an honorable mention for its Step Ahead Program, a six-week summer seminar that combines student support services with basic skills refresher courses. On average, the college reported, students who complete the program move up three levels when retaking a placement exam in English, mathematics or English as a Second language.

Each of the system's 112 colleges may nominate one program. Local academic senates are encouraged to form selection committees with representatives from students, staff, administration, and faculty. At the state level, a committee that included representatives of the state administrator groups, students, and faculty evaluated the nominated programs. The awards recognize programs that show evidence of the overall success of the programs, contribute to faculty engagement, demonstrate and response to the needs of the faculty and the college and provide evidence that demonstrates how the program supports the community college mission. Also, those nominated were scored on how the programs could be used as models for other community colleges.

The [California Community Colleges](#) is the largest system of higher education in the nation. It is composed of 72 districts and 112 colleges serving 2.6 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills courses in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

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