



NEWS

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For Immediate Release: June 28, 2021

Local High School Students Ready for Higher Education as Graduates of Compton College Upward Bound Math and Science Program

This fall, 90 percent of the recent high school graduates who participated in Compton College's Upward Bound Math and Science (UBMS) program will begin their studies at four-year colleges and universities. All are first-generation college students who benefited from the program, which aims to help students graduate from high school, enroll in college and successfully earn degrees. For most of these students, being accepted to a university was a distant goal with many obstacles, especially financial. UBMS provided them with the academic discipline, knowledge and resources needed to successfully enter higher education.

"The Upward Bound program encouraged me to do my best academically and gave me so much support and referrals to resources that I would not have found on my own," said Nancy Lopez, a 2021 graduate of Dominguez High School who will attend UCLA this fall on a full-ride scholarship. She plans to major in neuroscience and pursue a future career as a neuropsychiatrist. "In high school, I struggled with maintaining good mental health and I want to provide accessible mental health services to people like me in low-income communities," she said.

For many years, UBMS has been opening up possibilities for its students, and the program at Compton College is helping many local students from Compton and Dominguez high schools successfully enter four-year colleges and universities upon graduation. Established as part of the Department of Higher Education's TRIO initiative, Upward Bound Math and Science was created to remove barriers to access and success in higher education. The program helps participants improve their precollege performance and, ultimately, all of their higher education pursuits. UBMS serves high school students from low-income families, as well as those from families where neither parent earned a bachelor's degree.

During the pandemic, Compton College's UBMS staff worked hard to ensure there was no loss of services for the local high school students in the program. The UBMS team provided Saturday Academy, tutoring, and academic advising virtually in order to ensure the students' needs were met. "During this difficult school year, I witnessed many of our students work incredibly hard to maintain positive attitudes and excellent grades which was not an easy feat," said LeShawn Simplis-Barnes, Compton College UBMS program manager. "I am so proud of all of our students and their determination to meet their academic goals. TRIO works!"

In addition to the focused curriculum, students gain exposure to industry professionals within the math and science fields, participate in field trips to cultural, academic and educational events, and make new

friends with their peers who share similar interests. The course options include an 18-session Saturday Academy during the regular school year and a six-week Summer Program.

“The Upward Bound program exposed me to a whole lot of opportunities I would not have had otherwise. I gained a lot of knowledge about where I wanted to attend college and what I wanted to study,” said Brandon Velasco, a 2021 graduate of Compton High School who is on his way to the University of California, Irvine (UCI) to major in biology and possibly minor in political science. “This program set me on the path to a university and prepared me for college life. During the summer program, we stayed in college dorms and took some college classes to build on our academic skills. We also had team-building activities that created a positive atmosphere of collaboration with our fellow students. I learned that I work better with others in a team setting.” Velasco was awarded UCI’s prestigious Chancellor’s Excellence Scholarship to pay for his first two years. He is interested in studying parasitology and is considering work as a medical researcher, but is excited to learn about other career fields while at UCI.

A highlight of the Summer Program is spending finals week at a local four-year university so participants can get a hands-on perspective of college life. The students stay in the dorms, take their finals in lecture halls and may use some of the university resources such as computer labs. The program provides academic, counseling and tutoring services, SAT/ACT preparation, guest speakers, and field trips. Year-round support is also provided to assist students through the entire university enrollment process.

The Upward Bound Math and Science program is free to local high school students and is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For more information or to enroll in the program, contact LeShawn Simplis-Barnes, Compton College UBMS program manager, via email at lsimplisbarnes@compton.edu or visit the website: www.compton.edu/studentervices/supportservices/trio/

Photos available online:

Nancy Lopez,

http://www.compton.edu/adminandoperations/communityrelations/images/2021/Lopez_Nancy.jpg

Brandon Velasco,

http://www.compton.edu/adminandoperations/communityrelations/images/2021/Velasco_Brandon.jpg

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About Compton College

Compton College is the community’s education solution offering a full complement of transfer and degree courses, as well as career and technical education. Students may earn an associate degree or certificate, transfer to a four-year university or train for a career. Compton College is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA 90221.