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**San Diego State students chosen for leadership conference**

A select group of four San Diego State students were among 150 college students across California chosen to participate in a special leadership conference.

The Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Student Leadership Conference offered extensive professional and leadership development through direct interaction with industry mentors and speakers. The hand-picked MESA students, all science, engineering, or math majors, were from 24 universities and community colleges across the state, including San Diego State University.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) sponsored the event and more than 25 PG&E employees volunteered their time to work closely with the students during the 2-day conference in October.

PG&E was recognized for the extensive support the company has provided to assist educationally disadvantaged MESA students to graduate in math-based fields. PG&E has supported MESA since 1979. William Harper, PG&E vice president and chief diversity officer and MESA board member, addressed the students and encouraged them to continue.

“I see the future in this room, that is why PG&E is committed to building a workforce that reflects the diversity of our customers of the future by working with organizations like MESA,” he told the group.

NASA astronaut and MESA alumnus Jose Hernandez spoke to MESA students during the event.

The astronaut motivated students to continue through tough engineering and math courses with stories of his upbringing as a farm worker in central California. He went on from that humble background to fly aboard the Discovery space shuttle in 2009. He participated in MESA while a student at the University of the Pacific and UC Santa Barbara.

“It’s very important what MESA is doing to support you to stay in these fields,” Hernandez said. “I’m a product of MESA, so you see good things come out of the program.”

Now celebrating its 40th anniversary, MESA is one of the largest programs in the state to support educationally disadvantaged students so they can graduate from college with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) degrees.

“We know that California’s economy needs more STEM workers to stay competitive,” said MESA Executive Director Oscar F. Porter. “These students provide the solution to industry’s need for well-trained professionals.

“They were selected to attend the conference because these students have strong leadership skills. This event gives them a chance to interact extensively with STEM professionals currently working in the field,” said Porter.

Student attendees represented the following campuses: CSU Chico, CSU Fresno, CSU Los Angeles, CSU Sacramento, San Diego State University, San Francisco State University, San Jose State University, Sonoma State University, UC Riverside, UC Santa Cruz, University of the Pacific (Stockton), American River College (Sacramento), Bakersfield College, Butte College (Oroville), Cañada College (Redwood City), City College of San Francisco, Cosumnes River College (Sacramento), Los Medanos College (Pittsburg), Mission College (Santa Clara), Napa Valley College (Napa), Sacramento City College, Santa Rosa Junior College, Skyline College (San Bruno), Yuba College (Marysville).

**MESA**, an academic preparation program that each year serves about 20,000 California pre-college, community college and university students who are educationally disadvantaged, is an awarding winning program with a model that works. Seventy percent of MESA high school graduates statewide went directly to college after graduation compared to 48 percent of all California graduates. Sixty percent of MESA students go on to math, science or engineering majors.

**Pacific Gas and Electric Company**, a subsidiary of [PG&E Corporation](http://www.pge-corp.com/) (NYSE:PCG), is one of the largest combined natural gas and electric utilities in the United States. Based in San Francisco, with 20,000 employees, the company delivers some of the nation's cleanest energy to 15 million people in Northern and Central California. For more information, visit <http://www.pge.com/about/newsroom/>.

For more information about MESA visit <http://mesa.ucop.edu/home.html>.

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