



For Immediate Release

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Southwestern College MESA Student Attends Leadership Conference Costs underwritten by SDG&E and six other companies

CHULA VISTA – Southwestern College MESA student Maite Totorika recently honed her leadership skills at a special invitation-only conference in Sacramento for math-based majors. The event was sponsored by San Diego Gas and Electric and six other companies.

Totorika attended the Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) Student Leadership Conference in Sacramento last month—all expenses paid. Conference students heard guest speakers, such as former NASA astronaut Tammy Jernigan, who also led a women-in-Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) panel discussion.

The hand-picked MESA students, all science, engineering, or math majors, represented more than 30 universities and community colleges from across the state, including Southwestern College.

Students participated in mock interviews and connected with industry representatives from seven national and California companies. Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) was a major sponsor of the event. The company's \$40,000 grant allowed students from 20 Northern California campuses to attend. PG&E employees volunteered their time to work closely with the students during the conference.

San Diego Gas and Electric donated \$1,250 for Totorika, one San Diego City College and two San Diego State University students to attend the event.

Other sponsors included Pacific Gas and Electric, Edison International, Southern California Gas Company, Vanir Construction Management, Inc., Lawrence Livermore National Lab, and the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District.

"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."

MESA is one of the largest academic preparation STEM programs in the country and supports over 21,000 educationally disadvantaged students so they can graduate from college with math-based degrees. 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.

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

About Southwestern College

Established in 1961, Southwestern College is the only public institution of higher education in southern San Diego County, serving approximately 400,000 residents of communities including Bonita, Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, Nestor, Otay Mesa, Palm City, San Ysidro, Sunnyside and Coronado. The College District offers more than 300 associate degree and certificate options. More information at swccd.edu.

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