

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Diego City College

Media Contact:

Heidi Bunkowske
Public Information Officer
619.388.3911
hbunkows@sdccd.edu

Program Contact:

Rafael Alvarez
MESA Director
619.388.3156
ralvarez@sdccd.edu



Southwestern College

Media Contact:

Chris Bender
619.482.6564
cbender@swccd.edu

Program Contact:

Dr. Raga Bakhiet
MESA Director
619.482.6381
rbakhiet@swccd.edu



Area Community College Students to Train Local Residents on Computer Skills
California Connects equips Mathematics, Engineering and Science Achievement (MESA) students with laptops, software and Internet access

(April 11, 2011) --- Approximately 200 local community college students from San Diego City and Southwestern Colleges are receiving free, state-of-the-art laptops through **California Connects** to train local residents on computer literacy. As part of the Colleges' Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) programs, students will teach individuals, who lack access to or knowledge of the Internet, how to apply for college, find a job, access health and finance resources and engage with social networks.

“This is a very exciting opportunity,” said City College MESA Director Rafael Alvarez. “The training and technology tools will greatly help our MESA students to succeed in college, and the students will develop key skills by providing necessary digital literacy training to underserved communities.” Southwestern College MESA Director Dr. Raga Bakhiet added, “This is a twofold benefit to our community: service learning empowers our MESA students as educators and the community at large as learners of skills essential to be competitive in today’s economy.”

Students will receive a laptop fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology provided by HP, Microsoft, AT&T and Insight and will be provided outreach and hands-on training through the Microsoft IT Academy Program, giving them an opportunity to attain certification in Word, PowerPoint or Excel. Over the next three years, a total of 5,800 laptops will be distributed to MESA students at 33 California Community College campuses, enabling them to educate others and ultimately help increase the number of broadband Internet users in California by more than 61,000 individuals.

Designed to increase digital literacy and broadband access among underserved communities, **California Connects**, is funded by a \$10.9 million Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration. Officially launched in March 2011, California Connects will address a significant need and a widening digital divide that exists for many populations. An August 2010 study by the Public Policy Institute of California found that, while the digital divide has narrowed significantly among some demographic groups, a gap remains for Latinos, especially those from Spanish-speaking and economically disadvantaged households. California Connects is a program of the **Foundation for California Community Colleges**.



###

The City College and Southwestern College MESA Programs are part of the MESA statewide network of programs throughout California. First founded in 1970 at Oakland Technical High School with 25 students, MESA serves thousands of California students through 68 program centers in all segments of education, including:

- K-12: MESA Schools Program (MSP)
- Community College: MESA Community College Program (MCCP)
- University: MESA Engineering Program (MEP)

Through its 40-year record of successfully assisting educationally disadvantaged students to excel and graduate in math, engineering and science majors, MESA has become a nationally recognized model for innovative and effective academic development. The MESA model has also been adopted in thirteen other states.

Locally, the City College and Southwestern College MESA Programs are part of the San Diego MESA Alliance – *San Diego's pipeline for tomorrow's mathematicians, engineers and scientists*. The Alliance is a statewide model for intersegmental regional collaboration in STEM education. The Alliance serves over 2,200 students in San Diego County annually through a MESA educational "pipeline" of partner programs that includes pre-college (San Diego and Imperial County), community college (City College and Southwestern College) and university (San Diego State University). Moreover, City College, Southwestern College and San Diego State University are Hispanic Serving Institutions. For more information, visit: alliance.sdccmesa.com

###

About San Diego City College

Founded in 1914, San Diego City College serves as the educational cornerstone of downtown San Diego. With more than 18,000 students, City College offers 200+ Associate Degrees and Certificates and 1,500 day, evening and weekend classes, including programs in business, computer technology, and communications. Home to KSDS Jazz 88.3 and the award-winning Knights, City College is part of the San Diego Community College District, comprised of City College, Mesa College, Miramar College, and Continuing Education. For more information, visit: www.sdcc.edu

About Southwestern College

Accredited since 1964, 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 offers more than 312 associate degree and certificate options. For more information, visit: www.scwwd.edu