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Media Contacts

PUSD: Tim McGillivray, (909) 397-4800, ext. 3040

Cal Poly Pomona: Uyen Mai, (909) 869-5331

Western University: Rodney Tanaka, (909) 469-5402

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Pomona Health Career Ladder Helps Local Youths Attain Career Goals

*Pomona Unified, Cal Poly Pomona and Western University
Collaborate to Step Up Choices*

POMONA, Calif. – Pomona Unified School District, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and Western University of Health Sciences are partnering to guide Pomona students through their education and into careers as health care professionals.

Dr. Thelma Meléndez de Santa Ana, superintendent of Pomona Unified School District, Dr. J. Michael Ortiz, president of Cal Poly Pomona, and Dr. Philip Pumerantz, president of Western University of Health Sciences, signed a memorandum of understanding to develop the Pomona Health Career Ladder.

The three leaders will introduce the Career Ladder program to the community at a signing ceremony on Wednesday, June 11, 2008 at 9 a.m. at Cortez Mathematics and Science Magnet School, 1300 N. Dudley St., Pomona. (Thomas Bros. Map page 600, F-7)

The Career Ladder will identify math and science scholars in Pomona schools, guide them through an undergraduate health/science degree at Cal Poly Pomona and into health professions programs at WesternU through a program-based network of outreach, guidance, mentoring and financial assistance. In addition, the parties hope to generate support groups to provide private sources of financial aid for these scholars. The ultimate goal is to produce health care professionals who will serve the Pomona community.

The three organizations are all involved in the Pomona Youth and Family Master Plan, which addresses problems such as gang violence and poor academic achievement by fostering a caring community that promotes positive youth development through collaboration. The Career Ladder will be one of their major contributions to this effort.

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“This gives children a chance to become successful and to make a contribution to society,” Pumerantz said. “It’s to give children in the school system a view of what their future could be.”

One of the program’s distinctions is its focus on local youths.

“There are great minds in Pomona, and the Career Ladder is designed to encourage their success,” Ortiz said. “We know that a strong demand exists for science and health professionals in all of California. It seems natural that Pomona Unified, Cal Poly Pomona and Western University work together so young people interested in these fields can advance.”

Dr. Meléndez said the Pomona Health Career Ladder fits perfectly with the PUSD School Board’s desire to create new and better options for students.

“Parents have told us that they want more options for their children,” she said. “Cortez Mathematics and Science Magnet School is a direct result of those conversations. They’ve also told us that they want their children to have more options after graduation, and the Career Ladder is a wonderful option that can help students begin while they’re still with us.”

An advisory committee composed of representatives of all three institutions is being formed to create the details of the program, establish selection criteria, and develop the processes of mentoring and supporting students throughout their time in the program.

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