Children of migrant workers to get early college exposure

Throughout July, Sacramento State’s American River Courtyard residence hall is home to 300 middle and high school students and 40 parents who are taking part in the state-funded Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI).

This is the second year Sac State has hosted the institute, and three times as many students are participating this year.

“The first institute was such a success that a request was made to increase the number and extend the opportunity to middle school migrant students as well as high school students,” says Viridiana Diaz, director of the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) at Sacramento State. “That is how we went to 300 students this year.”

CAMP received an $850,000 grant from the California Department of Education’s Office of Migrant Education to host the institute, which extends the school year for children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers – and introduces them and their parents to the college experience.

MSLI is a part of Sacramento State’s mission to recruit and educate dynamic and diverse students who will become California’s leaders in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields.

“Those disciplines are the backbone of our economy and require a highly educated and tech-savvy workforce,” says Diaz.

The institute also is in line with the STEM initiative launched by Tom Torlakson, the state’s superintendent of public instruction, to create an integrated program with specific goals such as providing opportunities for students – especially those from underrepresented populations – to explore STEM-related fields and careers.

“Most CAMP college graduates attribute their success to the support and influence of their families, particularly their parents,” Diaz says. “When students are attending college as the first in their family, the entire family also is ‘attending’ college for the first time.

“The parents’ aspect of the Migrant Student Leadership Institute is designed to empower them with the information and resources to bridge the knowledge gap between them and California’s system of higher learning.”

For media assistance, contact Sacramento State’s Office of Public Affairs at (916) 278-6156. – Dixie Reid