

New compact with Cal State L.A. gives El Monte students boost in college admissions

By Juliette Funes, Staff Writer
Posted: 06/16/2011 11:30:47 PM PDT

El Monte Union High School District is expanding a deal with local higher education institutions that helps give its students an edge in admissions and registration.

The district and Rio Hondo College on Thursday signed an agreement with Cal State Los Angeles to ensure qualified students are given a direct path to college.

"We're trying to take down the barriers that some people may feel are there," district Superintendent Nick Salerno said. "I think this agreement takes something that many would consider a dream, and now you have a hard copy of something, a commitment, and it makes college a reality. It's tangible."

The El Monte Union Pledge Compact expands the partnership made last August between the district, Rio Hondo College and UC Irvine to give priority registration and admission to high school graduates.

The compact allows graduating students to take advantage of a one-time priority registration at Rio Hondo College and admission to UC Irvine and Cal State L.A. if they maintain a 3.0 grade-point average, meet graduation requirements and are eligible for CSU or UC admission.

"It's important for our students to know there's a real clear pathway, and it gives them incentive and that's what we're hoping," said Tony Ross, vice president of student affairs at Cal State L.A.

Counselors from the colleges will also meet with students and their parents to evaluate their progress and discuss financial aid.

"Students and their families hear about the difficult budget situation and they get discouraged," Ross said. "Students, there is a place for you despite what you hear. We want to make sure there's an opportunity for you to get on our campus."

The class of 2011 is the first group to take advantage of the original pledge with Rio Hondo and UC Irvine. The additional agreement with Cal State L.A. will take effect for the class of 2012.

Salerno said students have been applying to college in stronger numbers.

"This creates hope," he said. "I think when students see this and the commitments that are made ... it makes it much more doable and achievable for them and it gives them a direct path."

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