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## El Camino College Math/Science Leaders are Making the Grade Through the Student Enhancement Team (SET)

Karla Contreras enjoys her high school physics class, and wants to prepare for advanced placement physics next year. She found help with the El Camino College Student Enhancement Team (SET), a free program that places ECC students as math and science leaders at area high schools.

“The tutoring is so helpful – I still have questions, but now I know how to find the answers,” said Karla, a junior at Lennox Math, Science & Technology Academy who plans to study science in college. “The leaders do a great job. They have been where we are now and they are really patient as we try to understand the work.”

SET is funded by a STEM grant, and launched last spring with two high schools and a handful of students. The program has grown to include six high schools, a location at the Redondo Beach Main Library, and up to 100 students, said ECC coordinator Josefina Bedolla.

“A lot of the value of this program is establishing connections – the ECC students can offer great input about college as they help with math skills,” said Chase Orton, a math teacher at Environmental Charter High School. “The college students are very responsible; I never had any young people this attentive and eager to engage our kids.”

California faces a shortage of math and science teachers, and will need about 33,000 new teachers in these subjects over the next decade, according to a recent report by the California Council on Science and Technology and the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning. Strengthening math and science skills at the high school and college level will encourage more students to teach and/or enter these career fields.

Jean Shankweiler, dean of the El Camino College Natural Sciences Division said that program is especially beneficial to the college students, who must learn to balance work at the high schools with their own studies.

Eddie Ortiz, a mechanical engineering major, said helping younger students has been a great opportunity to teach others and better understand the material.

“I had average grades in high school math, but I liked it,” he said. “If had someone tutoring me, I would have done better. I feel like I’m making a difference.”

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