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For Immediate Release

**UCLA high school researchers take active role in their education**  
*Students investigated school conditions and prepare to share findings in national arena*

LOS ANGELES (March 2, 2011)—About 30 Los Angeles high school students will present plans for improving urban education during a community hearing March 4 at the UCLA Downtown Labor Center.

The Council of Youth Research, a project of UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA), is a group of 31 students from Crenshaw, Locke, Manual Arts, Roosevelt and Wilson high schools who use graduate-level social science theories and techniques to research the educational conditions at each of their schools. The students focused their research on five key areas: quality teaching, curriculum, learning resources, physical and social environments, and leadership.

For the past eight months, the Council has expanded on work begun last summer looking at the distribution of education resources. They will continue to collect data before traveling to the annual American Educational Research Association conference in New Orleans next month, where they will present their findings and discuss their role as youth researchers.

Council members conducted interviews with peers and educators and led teacher workshops on various subjects, like curriculum and leadership. The Crenshaw group got students elected to the campus' School Site Council, a decision-making group that takes an important role on school improvement programs and budget issues. They also distributed more than 1,250 surveys to students in Los Angeles and across the state.

Among the survey findings were: 62 percent of students did not think their voices were taken into consideration at their schools. Nearly half — 45 percent — don't think the state is providing them with a powerful, competitive education. And 55 percent of students said their schools look and feel like prisons.

The Roosevelt High School students, who concentrated on physical and social environments, titled their presentation "Saving Ourselves from Superheroes," a direct reference to the documentary *Waiting for Superman*, which portrays the East Los Angeles campus as a dropout factory. During the course of their research, the students discovered the potential harm caused by well-intentioned reformers.

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"We're not saying those in power don't care, but they just don't know how to help," said Esthephanie Solano, a Roosevelt student who will present Friday.

Ernest Morrell, UCLA IDEA associate director and professor in urban schooling at UCLA's Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, said youth should be part of the conversation on education reform, since it directly impacts them.

"It's not only necessary for them to be involved, but we can learn a lot from them," Morrell said. "They're bright, intelligent people with opinions and, in this case, a tremendous amount of skill."

The community hearing will begin at **5:30 p.m. at the UCLA Downtown Labor Center, 675 S. Park View St.**

IDEA has worked with student researchers since 1999, tackling diverse subject areas, including budget cuts, youth political participation and the experiences of students of color post-Brown v. Board of Education.

For further information on the hearing, the Council of Youth Research or IDEA, visit [www.ucla-idea.org](http://www.ucla-idea.org)

**UCLA's Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access** is a research institute seeking to understand and challenge pervasive racial and social class inequalities in education. In addition to conducting independent research and policy analysis, IDEA supports educators, public officials, advocates, community activists and young people as they design, conduct, and use research to make high-quality public schools and successful college participation routine in all communities.

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