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**Contact:** Cynthia V. Zarate, *Alliance for a Better Community*  
Cell: 213.219.6055/ [cynthia@afabc.org](mailto:cynthia@afabc.org)

**Contact:** Evelyn G. Aleman, *Media Image Public Relations*  
Cell: 818.943.6121/ [evaleman@earthlink.net](mailto:evaleman@earthlink.net)

**SOME LAUSD SCHOOLS BETTER AT PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE**

*New UCLA study documents that the particular high school students attend makes a big difference*

**Los Angeles, CA (November 20, 2008)** – A new study by UCLA’s Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access (IDEA) and the University of California’s All Campus Consortium on Research for Diversity (UC ACCORD) reveals that students who enter high school with similar prior education experiences have tremendously different rates of success depending on the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) high school they attend. **The study will be presented before the school board on Thursday, November 20, 2008, at 1 p.m. in the Board Room at LAUSD headquarters at 333 S. Beaudry Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90017.**

Conducted in collaboration with the LAUSD and the Latino Scorecard Education Action Team (LSEAT), the study analyzed district data to examine the effectiveness of high schools in enabling various groups of students to move from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade to on-time high school graduation four years later, and to graduation with the successful completion of college preparatory courses (known as ‘A-G’) required for entry into California’s public university system.

Using on-time high school graduation and A-G course completion as real-world indicators of an “effective” education, the study examined the cohort of students who entered the 9th grade in 2001-02, and who were expected to graduate in 2004-05. The UCLA study found that although course failure is common and graduation and A-G completion rates are low, a surprising array of schools exceed the district’s average rates. In fact, many schools that enroll students at greatest risk of dropping out – those with limited English skills, low test scores, and with poor academic records in middle school – graduate students better prepared for college than other schools in the district.

“Our results show that although students’ past performance and educational experiences matter and remain strong predictors of whether or not they’ll graduate high school and move on to college, past performance does not set an inevitable trajectory,” said Dr. John Rogers, Director of UCLA’s IDEA.

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The study also found that attending a small, “theme-based” LAUSD high school increased a student’s chance of graduating on time by 25 percent and more than doubled a student’s chance of completing the A-G sequence of courses.

The researchers recommend that the LAUSD take a closer look at its “more effective” schools, learn what they are doing well, and spread their practices to other district high schools. According to the authors, exclusive reliance on test-based accountability measures such as the Academic Performance Index (API) to determine school effectiveness is inadequate. “API cannot capture the impact of these school differences as no attention is paid to the wide range of academic experiences held by first-time freshmen,” said Dr. Marisa Saunders, UCLA researcher and co-author of the study. “High school practices and conditions can make a tremendous difference in student outcomes,” added Saunders. The district needs new measures of effectiveness that consider high school practices and experiences that prepare and lead to high school graduation and postsecondary opportunities.

The LSEAT is comprised of community organizations such as United Way of Greater Los Angeles, Families in Schools, and Alliance for a Better Community that together advocate for the provision of college preparatory classes to *all* LAUSD students, holding schools accountable for graduation rates, and conducting research that can identify the best practices of LA schools with a strong record of student achievement. “This study confirms what many already suspected, which is that some schools are ‘more effectively’ preparing students academically. Now we know what schools are most effective, and the district can begin to examine in detail why these schools are doing better than others with a certain subgroup of students,” said Veronica Melvin, Executive Director of the Alliance for a Better Community.

*For more information about “The Impact of High School on Student Achievement within the Los Angeles Unified School District: A Value-Added Approach,” policy brief, please contact Cynthia Zarate by calling 213.219.6055 or via e-mail at [cynthia@afabc.org](mailto:cynthia@afabc.org). **The full report and policy brief can be found on line at [www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/lseat](http://www.idea.gseis.ucla.edu/lseat).***

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