



Viewpoints

## California's MESA Program Opens STEM Doors to Low Income and First Generation College Students



California's Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement (MESA) program is a beacon of innovation and inclusivity in STEM education. By targeting students from underrepresented and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, MESA addresses the critical need for diversity in STEM fields. The program offers a comprehensive suite of academic support services, including hands-on learning experiences, mentorship, and access to advanced coursework, which are pivotal in preparing students for college and careers in STEM. Through its partnerships with schools, universities, and industry leaders, MESA creates a robust support network that not only enhances students' academic skills but also exposes them to real-world applications of STEM concepts. This holistic approach ensures that students are not only college-ready but also competitive in a rapidly evolving job market.

Moreover, MESA's emphasis on community and collaboration cultivates a sense of belonging and empowerment among its participants. By fostering a collaborative learning environment, MESA encourages students to work together on projects, engage in peer tutoring, and participate in STEM competitions. These experiences build critical teamwork and leadership skills, which are essential in both academic and professional settings. Additionally, MESA's focus on mentorship connects students with role models and professionals who can provide guidance, support, and inspiration. This mentorship is particularly important for underrepresented students, as it helps them navigate potential challenges and envision a future in STEM fields. Ultimately, MESA's commitment to diversity, equity, and excellence in STEM education not only transforms individual lives but also contributes to the broader goal of creating a more inclusive and innovative STEM workforce.

**Alina Kralya tinkers with a microcontroller for one of her computer science projects at American River College. Nearby, a group of other first-generation college students sit in green and blue chairs, chatting about their math homework. It's a typical scene at this community college space for students in the Math, Engineering, and Science Achievement program, called MESA.**



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Between language barriers, a brand new academic system and trying to make sense of trigonometry, it hasn't been an easy journey for the 20-year-old, who dreams of going into robotics. When she needs tutoring or just a quiet place to study away from her younger siblings, she comes to the MESA center.

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## Professionals

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