

# EDUCATION

ACADEMY FOR COLLEGE EXCELLENCE

## COMES TO HARTNELL



From left to right: Hermelinda Rocha, faculty member, supports Javier Cadena and Maria Razo as they share their success stories with the Hartnell Foundation Board on March 17, 2010

Academy for College Excellence (ACE) is a new program at Hartnell that takes a totally different approach to supporting students including those considered ultra-risk, by sparking their desire to learn and empowering them to channel this motivation within academic and work environments. The Hartnell Foundation has been raising funds for new textbooks for our ACE students. Thanks to the Monterey Peninsula Foundation, the first classes have been provided with books that are going to be passed on to the next students.

The purpose of ACE is to give under-prepared students, who do not see themselves as college bound, a chance to succeed in higher education and work effectively in knowledge-based careers. In the two-week, day-long Foundation Course students learn a great deal about themselves and their learning styles. Following the Foundation course, students take the same block of courses together for a full semester, as a cohort.

Javier Cadena was in the very first ACE cohort at Hartnell. As an ex gang member, college seemed out of his reach. Now he has a new life. "I learned a lot about myself during the program. Now, I am drug free, a full-time student getting A's in Math and Science; working towards being an engineer. Physically, mentally, and spiritually, I feel like I belong here."

"ACE helped me on many different levels: at school, at home, with my family. I use to not care about education at all, and now I can't wait to go to class," says Maria Razo, a current ACE student. Maria wants to become an Adolescent Substance Abuse counselor, a profession she didn't know existed before coming to Hartnell.

The faculty teaching the courses go through the foundation course themselves prior to teaching it to students. "Participating in the Foundation Course has been an unforgettable experience for me," says Larry Adams, Instructor at Hartnell College.

"The cohort system works wonderfully because the students are all together, 5 days a week, 8 am to 5 pm, supporting each other, learning about each other and ways of interacting effectively," says Hermelinda Rocha, Hartnell College faculty member. "I've never seen any other program that posts such impressive results. It transforms lives."

During the last three semesters, Hartnell has had a total of ten cohorts. Next semester the college plans to have 7 more cohorts or about 200 students enter the program.

Recently, the Gates Foundation awarded a major grant to the ACE program at various colleges. The grant will help Hartnell train more teachers. Gates Foundation views the program as a possible solution for remedial education – replacing it with an accelerated mode.



Second cohort of ACE students at Hartnell.