



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CONTACT:**

Scott Hernandez-Jason, UC Merced Office of Communications

Office: 209-228-4408 | Cell: 209-756-2368 | Email: [shernandez-jason@ucmerced.edu](mailto:shernandez-jason@ucmerced.edu)

## **UC Merced to Connect Research, Practices to Improve Youth Well-Being**

*The Chancellor's Task Force on Community Engaged Scholarship will hold a conference to showcase successful research and evidence-based programs that promote youth development*

MERCED, Calif. — In an effort to help improve the health of young people in the Central Valley, the University of California, Merced, will host a conference next month to connect innovative researchers with community members working to improve the lives of area youth.

“Building Healthy Youth in Merced County: Community Engagement and Scholarship” will showcase successful research and evidence-based programs that can promote positive youth development in Merced County.

The conference is being organized by the campus’ Chancellor’s Task Force on Community Engaged Scholarship. The conference will be from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Dec. 2 in the campus’ California Room. The deadline to [register](#) to attend is Nov. 28.

“Youth development occurs on many levels and through many practices,” task force member and anthropology Professor Robin DeLugan said. “This conference provides

### **Quick Facts**

- The Chancellor’s Task Force on Community Engaged Scholarship is holding a conference on Dec. 2 to share successful research programs with the community.
- The task force is working to build bridges between the university and community groups.
- More than 300 members of the campus and the community have participated in workshops on community-engaged scholarship since summer 2011.

an opportunity to illustrate how research links with successful programs, interventions and systems changes that are improving outcomes for young people in Merced and in our region.”

Vajra Watson, founder of Sacramento Area Youth Speaks and director of research and policy for equity at UC Davis’ Center for Cooperative Research and Extension Services for Schools, will deliver the keynote talk. Watson’s work focuses on closing the achievement gap, specifically on holistic reform efforts for chronically underperforming schools in rural, suburban and urban communities.

Presenters from other UCs and nonprofit organizations will talk about youth arts programs, collaborations between school districts and community organizations, restorative justice, wilderness and academic programming, and 4-H engagement.

Tony Slaton, executive director with Merced’s Boys and Girls Club, plans on attending the conference. He said he’s hoping to find new and innovative ideas for collaboration that will help improve the lives of the county’s youth.

“I love Merced, and I’m interested in finding out more about being an effective community worker,” Slaton said. “How do we work together to have a bigger effect on the community? How do we work together to support the young people?”

UC Merced’s Task Force on Community-Engaged Scholarship was awarded two years of funding from The California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities initiative to strengthen the collaboration between the campus and community. The alliance will work to build a body of knowledge about local health issues as well as the factors that influence health equity.

The task force was formed in 2009 to encourage, support and highlight community-engaged scholarship at UC Merced.

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*UC Merced opened Sept. 5, 2005, as the 10th campus in the University of California system and the first American research university of the 21st century. The campus significantly expands access to the UC system for students throughout the state, with a special mission to increase college-going rates among students in the San Joaquin Valley. It also serves as a major base of*

*advanced research and as a stimulus to economic growth and diversification throughout the region. Situated near Yosemite National Park, the university is expected to grow rapidly, topping out at about 25,000 students within 30 years.*