



MESA[®]

College of Marin

AUGUST 2025 NEWSLETTER



COLLEGE OF MARIN STEM ENROLLMENT GROWTH

Only two years after MESA's Spring 2023 debut, campus data is starting to show the program's impacts.

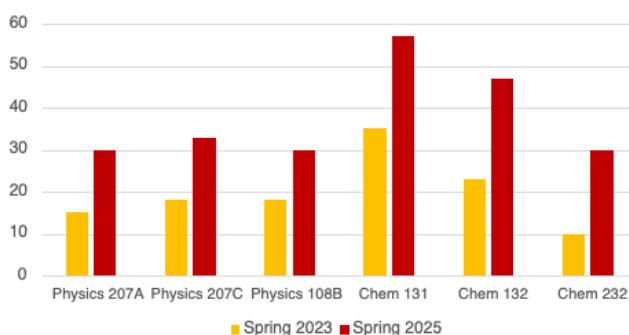
Across the state, community college enrollment is relatively stagnant. Between Spring 2023 and Spring 2025, College of Marin experienced a total for-credit enrollment growth of 10%. However, enrollment in transferrable STEM courses grew by **76%**, including **271% increase in Latinx enrollment** and **66% increase in female enrollment**. For example, we experienced a **1,000% increase in Latinx enrollment in Organic Chemistry**, the highest level of chemistry offered.

Latinx students now comprise **40%** of College of Marin's transferrable STEM enrollment, as compared to 37% of general for-credit enrollment. This is an exciting trend that contradicts traditional underrepresentation.

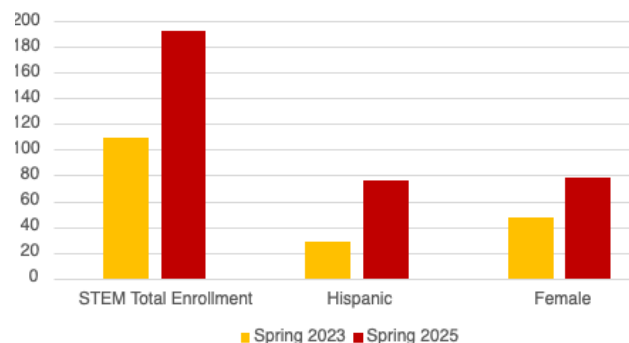
After almost eleven years on campus, former Dean Carol Hernandez shares the following: **"MESA has had a powerful impact on STEM culture and enrollment at the College of Marin. There is a buzz in the hallways of the SMN building that did not exist prior to MESA. COM is now the place to study STEM in Marin County. The STEM culture MESA is creating is contagious and bleeds into all aspects of the college."**

That being said, there is still progress to be made. The MESA team aims to better connect with Black/African American students, and continue to increase the number of women enrolled in physics and engineering.

Transferrable STEM Class Enrollment



Transferrable STEM Class Enrollment



TRANSFER STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

We are so very proud of the **23** MESA students who graduated this Spring and will be pursuing STEM degrees at a four-year university:

- Andy Nguyen, Plant Sciences at UC Davis
- Autumn Sandone, Molecular & Cell Biology at UC Berkeley
- Bryan Flores, Computer Science at UC San Diego
- Carlos Javier Sosa, Mechanical Engineering at UC Riverside
- Christopher Gordian Diaz, Civil Engineering at UC Berkeley
- Connor Trimble, Computer Sciences at San Francisco State
- David Hall, Physics at UC Santa Cruz
- Deivi Velasquez, Physics at UC Berkeley
- Dominic Trimble, Nuclear Engineering at UC Berkeley
- Donna Garcia Vazquez, Biochemistry at San Jose State
- Hannah Periana, Molecular & Cell Biology at UC Berkeley
- Jake Ures, Biochemistry at UC San Diego
- Lucas Gahnstedt, Computer Sciences at UC Santa Cruz
- Matthew Kan, Public Health at UC Irvine
- Nadezhda Novichkova, Computer Sciences at UC Santa Cruz
- Nyima Tamang, Computer Sciences at UC San Diego
- Olivia Thorgersen, Molecular & Cell Biology at UC Berkeley
- Reva Siu-Masset, Sustainable Environmental Design at UC Berkeley **College of Marin Commencement Speaker**
- Sandra Klyce, Biology at UC San Diego
- Sheila Sandoval, Microbial Biology at UC Berkeley
- Timothy Carroll, Electrical Engineering at UC San Diego
- Yanina Miller, Computer Sciences at UC Santa Cruz
- Yanira Gonzalez, Aviation at San Jose State University



In Summer 2025, we launched a new opportunity for MESA students: the Ramp up to Research Summer Program. Inspired by Santa Rosa Junior College, this program is flexible and part-time, allowing students to secure STEM experience who otherwise may not be able to, especially those who work full-time, have caretaking responsibilities, are undocumented, or are not yet prepared for traditional internships.

For six weeks, students attended weekly workshops led by Dr. Daniel Cooper. They developed a personal research topic, found and read relevant peer-reviewed articles, wrote an abstract and literature review, and met with current researchers.

At the conclusion of the program, students received a \$500 stipend, funded by the MESA grant and a generous donation from the Latinx Employee Resource Group at BioMarin.

Student Research Topics:

- "Heartbeats and Hardware: How Pacemakers and Defibrillators Revolutionized Heart Disease Survival"
- "Biofuels or EVs: Which One Will Drive the Future of Transportation?"
- "Women in Aviation: A Focus on Latina Women"
- "Quantum Computing for Climate Solutions"
- "Exoskeletal Enhancements: Surpassing Human Limits"
- "The Renewable Energy Paradox: Solar Energy to Hydrocarbons"
- "AI powers more Intelligent Electric Vehicles"
- The effects of nature on mental health & well-being
- Mitigating environmental effects of disposed chemical waste
- Outdoor recreation and Latine youth



COUNSELOR CORNER



**"EL ÉXITO ES LA SUMA DE
PEQUEÑOS ESFUERZOS
REPETIDOS DÍA TRAS DÍA"**
**"SUCCESS IS THE SUM OF
SMALL EFFORTS REPEATED
DAY AFTER DAY"**

Hola!

2024-2025 was a whirlwind of a year!

Every single one of our MESA scholars has worked extremely hard to continue to grow in their STEM journeys. From showing up to class to every exam accomplished, these semesters have been full of growth and bravery. I am privileged to be part of their journeys and to help determine out what their paths will look like while at COM and afterwards.

In a world where so many things go wrong and can be out of our control, each student makes the daily decision to be brave, to show up and continue to push themselves despite the obstacles.

One thing I hope all students know is that they are meant to take up space, to use their voices, to be seen, to rest. The world is better with all of them in it.

-Guadalupe Jimenez Martinez

NATIONAL DIVERSITY IN STEM CONFERENCE



At the end of October, six MESA students (+1 alumna) were selected to attend the National Diversity in STEM Conference, hosted by the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS).

The large multidisciplinary and multicultural conference equipped, empowered, and energized our students for their academic and professional futures in STEM. For four days, students attended cutting-edge research talks, professional development workshops, motivational keynote speakers, and networked at a very large career & graduate school fair. Participants bonded over shared meals and activities, including a California-wide MESA program lunch, Pow Wow, and Pachanga.

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Attending SACNAS allowed me to bring my fullest self into a STEM environment where I was able to connect with people who had similar cultures to mine. It gave me the opportunity to converse with professionals who understood the struggles that Latinos face in STEM. I was lucky enough to be able to converse about science in Spanish for the first time with amazing PhD students who motivated me and advised me in my educational journey and personal life.

- Donna, Biochemistry



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: LISETTE GUTIERREZ

Hi everyone! I am Lisette, and I am a third year chemistry major. My career goal is between forensic chemist or pharmacology. Living half of my life here in California and in Mexico, while also being first generation, it is hard to navigate college on my own. I am very thankful to learn and be part of MESA. They create and encourage opportunities for STEM students to help them grow. Thanks to them, I attended my first conference, Women in Engineering at San Jose State University. I am truly grateful for my professors and mentors for encouraging me to do new things.

I really enjoy chemistry and learning new things. Trying to figure out what career I want to do in Chemistry is hard, I am proud to be a co-founder and President of the American Chemical Society chapter at COM. This fall I will be interning at Buck Institute as a team member of the Environmental Health and Safety and working as a student assistant at MESA. I am really excited for everything coming up! :)



"Today, I want to share my academic journey with you. I hope that my story will inspire you to stay motivated as you pursue your personal goals or prepare to transfer.

After finishing high school in Mexico, I faced the reality that college expenses can be overwhelming. I watched my mother struggle to cover my expenses, especially when my dad sometimes underestimated these costs. One day, shortly after Mother's Day, I made a spontaneous and life-changing decision to return to the United States. Family members always told me that working in the U.S. would let me quickly achieve my goals and support myself. But the reality turned out to be much harder—the economy went bad, rent was unaffordable, and even gas became expensive.

I had to get creative and resourceful. I immediately got a job, sorting through paperwork to enroll in school, bought a car, and learned how to survive independently. College of Marin gave me determination; it gave me purpose. It showed me clearly that the hard work I invested would eventually pay off. Today, I am proudly transferring to a UC.



Living far from your parents is never easy. Many days, all I wanted was to talk with them about my classes or all I wanted was to talk with them about my classes or achievements. But as a first-generation student, that is expected, those conversations can be challenging. That is why I am deeply grateful for the MESA community, who gave me a sense of belonging and a welcoming space to discuss my thoughts about university life. Nicole and Guadalupe were always there, asking how I am doing, inviting me to conferences, helping expand my social circle, and even providing me an unforgettable trip to Phoenix.

I'll be honest: my journey was challenging. I slept in my car, spent nights on an air mattress at my brother's home, and even slept in a mechanic shop. But through persistence, hard work, and support from COM, I finally managed to rent a place where I could study, have proper meals, and fully focus on my classes.

(Continued on page 6)

AAUW MARIN CELEBRATES WOMEN IN STEM

In May, the Marin chapter of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) generously awarded two MESA members the "AAUW & MESA Women in STEM Award". The recipients were celebrated for their academic success, career goals, and positive impacts in their community. They will receive \$2,500 each toward their future studies.

Congratulations to:

Sheila Sandoval is transferring to UC Berkeley to study microbial biology. She plans to become a Physician's Assistant to facilitate health equity for fellow Latinos. When she's not taking intense STEM classes, Sheila works at a fast food restaurant and helps raise her younger siblings.

Olivia Thorgersen has led the College of Marin sustainability club and formerly served as a MESA tutor. She is transferring to UC Berkeley to study molecular and cell biology. This summer, Olivia will be completing a research internship at Harvard University.



6 INSPIRING WORDS FROM MESA'S SPRING CELEBRATION

(Continued from page 5)

As you hear this speech, I'm on my way back to Mexico to surprise my mother with the news that I've been accepted to UCSD to pursue my degree in Computer Science and even take her to a nice restaurant. What makes this even more special is that I'll be giving her this exciting news on Mother's Day.

I want every Latino student, every international student, and everyone here today to know that you can achieve this too. It won't always be easy; in fact, it rarely will be. But as my mother always tells me, "Ten paciencia hijo, deja que todo fluya en manos de Dios—Have patience, let everything flow according to God's will."

Thank you, everyone, for being part of this incredible journey. Keep believing in yourselves—your dreams are always worth pursuing."

- Bryan Flores

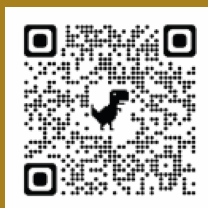


2024-25 BY THE NUMBERS

- **95** Active members meeting ongoing requirements
- **23** Transferring students
- **53** Events
- Weekly facilitated study groups for **10** STEM classes
- Tutoring offered for **20+** STEM classes
- **21+** MESA student internships and fellowships



COLLEGE OF
MARIN



www1.marin.edu/mesa

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MESA ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To join the MESA cohort, students must meet state-wide eligibility criteria:

- Studying a calculus-based STEM field major
- Intend to transfer to a four-year university
- Be a first-generation college student (parents did not graduate with a four-year degree)
- Demonstrate financial need by receiving financial aid or by participating in EOPS/CARE/CalWORKS/CalFresh/TANF
- Have not previously earned a bachelor's degree
- Be a US Citizen, Permanent Resident, or AB540

Friends of MESA:

Students may join the "Friends of MESA cohort" if they meet the above requirements but EITHER demonstrate financial need OR are a first-generation college student.

Learn more at www1.marin.edu/MESA.