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3/7/2023

Senator Padilla
255 E. Temple St.
Los Angeles, CA, 90012

RE: UC Santa Barbara SciTrek STEM Initiative for Local Schools

Dear Senator Padilla:

The Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce would like to express our support of the University of California, Santa Barbara's FY24 Community Project Funding request for SciTrek.

The Chamber supports the goals of SciTrek's mission to expand and deepen inquiry-based STEM learning throughout schools in Santa Barbara County. UC Santa Barbara's SciTrek program has operated for twelve years, bringing hundreds of trained UC Santa Barbara students into local elementary and secondary classrooms to reach ~2500 students each year into Santa Barbara area schools. Five UCSB students per classroom and SciTrek staff lead students in self-directed investigations covering all areas of science and math over a period of five to seven days, with a focus on improving critical thinking and improving attitudes towards science. All materials and workbooks are provided free. The program has shown improvement in 2nd-12th grade student's performance, teacher professional training, and UCSB student retention.

Currently, SciTrek is conducting modules in eight schools within the Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD). This funding will allow for program expansion to all schools with the SBUSD and Goleta Union School District. The funding will also allow SciTrek to expand their virtual model into ten additional schools in the Northern part of Santa Barbara County to serve students in the Santa Maria and Lompoc area.

Initiatives that assist teachers and students engage with STEM content in a fun and innovative way promotes equality in education, provide hands-on learning opportunities, fosters creativity and can help encourage children to pursue a career in STEM fields. Additionally, programs like UC Santa Barbara's SciTrek play a critical role in expanding the qualifications and skill sets of our future local workforce.

Thank you for your consideration of expanding the SciTrek initiative to serve students in Santa Barbara County.

Sincerely,

Kristen Miller
President & CEO
Santa Barbara South Coast Chamber of Commerce