# UC Irvine hosts EmpowHER conference

The conference saw Orange County high schoolers visit UCI Physical Sciences to learn about STEM fields.

Friday, December 22, 2023

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*Photo from UCI*

“The conference was such an empowering experience for all of us who participated,”  said Professor Mu-Chun Chen, who’s the Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the UCI School of Physical Sciences. “We hope the community that has been formed through the project will sustain and continue to grow.”

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On Saturday, December 16th, the School of Physical Sciences welcomed 17 students from nearby Godinez High School to UC Irvine for the EmpowHER (Empowering Women through High School Engagement and STEM Research) conference. With support from a grant from the American Association for University Women, the conference gave high schoolers insight into various STEM majors, research and career pathways, and introduced them to navigating imposter feelings and building confidence in pursuing a STEM discipline. “The event was a success thanks to the amazing people who were a part of making the day happen,” said Ash Hormaza, program coordinator for the Office of Access, Outreach and Inclusion at the School of Physical Sciences. “Our keynote speaker, Dr. Brenda A. Rounds, a chemistry professor from Cal State Los Angeles, gave an inspiring talk about her journey in higher education as a Latina in STEM, and our UCI student panel led important discussions and shared insights about life as STEM students and what it means to build community.” The day ended with the students meeting Professors Jenny Yang and Herdeline Ardoña, who shared stories of their research and gave students a firsthand look at their laboratories. “I hope the students realize they can pursue their desired paths in STEM, knowing there are people ready to support and help them achieve their dreams,” said Hormaza.

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