District Launches Step Up Pathways Program for African American Students

What: Launch of program for African American students to earn college credit while in high school from Benedict College, one of the country’s historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs)

When: Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022
6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Where: Fresno City College Old Administration Building
1101 E. University Ave. (93741)

Fresno Unified will launch the HBCU Step Up Pathways Program, a partnership between Benedict College, an HBCU in Columbia, S.C, and Bullard, Edison and Sunnyside high schools. Fresno Unified will be the first district in California to partner with an HBCU for a dual enrollment program of this kind. Students accepted into the program have the opportunity to earn up to 12 free college units through live virtual classes with Benedict professors.

Students who successfully complete the HBCU Step Up program are guaranteed admission to Benedict College, and will have access to an HBCU tour, college fairs and summer enrichment, additional academic support, and scholarship opportunities.
The program will expose students to the academic and cultural experience of an HBCU while earning college credit.

Speakers will include Superintendent Bob Nelson; Gloria Ponce-Rodriguez, Fresno Unified College Readiness manager and a member of the Step Up team; Dr. Kalisha Spomer, a counselor and articulation officer at Fresno City College and the California representative for Benedict College; and Zerina Hargrove-Brown, principal at Terronez Middle School and Step Up coordinator. The launch will include a video message from Benedict College’s Dr. Roslyn Artis, president, and Dr. Janeen Witty, vice president of academic affairs. Fresno Unified trustees will also attend.

“We are excited to offer this first of its kind program to our African American students. This is another way to encourage our students to not only prepare for and pursue college, but to learn more about the life-changing experience of attending a HBCU,” said Superintendent Bob Nelson.

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