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Path to college mapped

PROMISE: LBUSD students who do their best are assured place in higher education.

By Kevin Butler, Staff Writer

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Christopher Steinhauser, superintendent of the Long Beach Unified School District, tells fifth-graders from Webster Elementary School and students from City College and Cal State Long Beach that because of the importance of education, the district is joining with university President F. King Alexander, behind him, and Long Beach City College President Eloy Oakley, right, in an educational partnership. (Diandra Jay/Staff Photographer)

LONG BEACH - Leaders of the city's community college, school district and university on Thursday jointly pledged to make higher education an attainable goal for all students, including offering incoming pupils at Long Beach City College a tuition-free first semester by 2011.

The "Long Beach College Promise" is a joint effort by LBCC, the Long Beach Unified School District and Cal State Long Beach to begin conducting outreach to parents and students concerning higher education opportunities beginning in the sixth grade.

"From beginning to end, we will be there for you," LBCC Superintendent-President Eloy Oakley told a group of Webster Elementary students at the ceremony at the Walter Pyramid on the CSULB campus.

Part of the plan calls for offering a tuition-free first semester for LBUSD students entering LBCC.

The community college plans on raising about \$6 million to \$7 million to create an endowment to cover tuition for those students who don't qualify for sufficient financial aid, Oakley said.

Cal State Long Beach President F. King Alexander pledged to admit all LBUSD students who meet the minimum college preparatory or community-college transfer requirements.

The parties pledged to discuss with students and families, beginning in the sixth-

grade, college applications, financial aid and course requirements.

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For too long, higher education institutions have focused outreach efforts on high schools while overlooking the important role that middle schools play, Alexander said.

"Middle schools have been neglected for many years by colleges and universities because we were not aware of how important it is in the college expectations process," he said.

CSULB currently uses dual admission standards based on where an applicant lives. Those living within an approximately 20-mile radius of the campus - an area that includes the entire LBUSD - have to meet only the minimum CSU



Webster Elementary School fifth-graders Onolina Faumuina and Daniela Emery, from right, join classmates and college students from Long Beach City College and Cal State Long Beach in celebrating the Long Beach College Promise. Educators said the pledge was made to elementary school students because getting on the road to higher education has to start as early as possible. (Diandra Jay/Staff Photographer)

admission criteria. Those living outside the

boundaries face tougher requirements.

The three institutions plan to work closely together to conduct outreach and help students pursue a variety of higher education options, officials said.

LBUSD Superintendent Chris Steinhauser told more than 100 Webster students at the ceremony that he expected them to promise to work hard.

"You need to do the best you can all the time," he said.

Parents also have to be involved in ensuring that students are doing their academic work, he added.

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