**SEEDS: Sustainability Summit 2016**
San Diego Mesa College
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**INTRODUCTION**

At the 2016 SEEDS Sustainability Summit approximately 120 high school students from all over San Diego visited Mesa College to engage in activities that pertain to, sustainability, environmental injustices, hunger and food security. This event was provided by the SEEDS Scholars Program to inform high school students about issues which heavily impact the underrepresented communities at large in San Diego. The high school students were separated into teams named, Team Agua, Team Aire, Team Suelo, and Team Bosque. All teams circulated to each activity where students engaged in conversations on how to create projects and leadership skills to build green communities that benefit public health and environmental justice.

**ABSTRACT**

The SEEDS Scholars Program at San Diego Mesa College has been established to serve Hispanic and Latino students who are in pursuit of obtaining degrees in the STEM fields. SEEDS educates student scholars on agricultural-related fields, global food security, hunger and sustainability. Mentoring and leadership development are key components to the program so that underrepresented students have the experiences necessary to become the driving leaders in our communities. Part of the SEEDS Scholars Program grant activities include hosting a Sustainability Summit to enrich the learning experiences of underrepresented high school and Mesa College students. During the 2016 Sustainability Summit, the student participants were separated into teams where each group was then led through discussions by SEEDS Scholars. Issues surrounding sustainability and environmental injustices were discussed to understand the day-to-day experiences of those living in disproportionately-impacted communities. During the closing discussion, the teams discussed how individuals can become involved in promoting environmental justice and food security.

**THE FUTURE**

The Sustainability Summit is a day where high school students who are interested in the STEM majors, can hear about the social, economical, agricultural, and political areas of study within the green industries. As climate change continues, it is crucial these future underrepresented students understand the leadership roles they can acquire to represent these social issues. Due to the growing impacts of social injustices in low socioeconomically communities, it is key to educate the future generations within such areas. In addition the expanding underrepresented students at community colleges, creating pathways into the science fields will culturally benefit the sciences.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Teams Agua, Aire, Bosque and Suelo experienced community connections with representatives from the following:

- USDA Animal and Plant Inspection Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- SEEDS Scholars Program at Mesa College
- Dean’s Greens
- Enviro-Business Society at SDSU
- Feeding America San Diego
- French Club at Mesa College
- Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank
- Mission Trails Regional Park
- Pure Water San Diego
- San Diego Audubon Society
- SanDiego350
- Strategic Energy Innovations (SEI)
- Surfrider Foundation (San Diego County Chapter)

Collaboratively creating spaces for the underrepresented high school students will encourage them to study within STEM-related fields.

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**Images**

- Team Agua learning about native plants.
- Students pose after their environmental justice session facilitated by SEEDS Scholars.
- Meeting with a soil conservationist from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Having fun in the exhibit hall.
- Graduate students from San Diego State University present their research.
- Meeting with local park rangers.