San Diego State University focuses on low-income families with the Educational Opportunity Programs

By ROMAN FLORES, Staff Writer

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CALEXICO — As new and returning college students from all over the Imperial Valley prepare for school this fall, San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus has programs in place to help them with their transition.

The Educational Opportunity Program and Ethnic Affairs, or EOP, has been helping low-income and educationally disadvantaged students at SDSU for almost 32 years, said Americo Yacopi, student services professional, adviser and EOP coordinator for SDSU-IV.

“We’re one of the academic supports for math and writing so students can make sure they do their best,” Yacopi said.

“We also offer additional counseling (aside from the counseling already given to students by their academic advisers). First-generation economically disadvantaged students can also receive an EOP grant of up to $1,000 and other benefits attached to the program,” Yacopi said.

Yacopi said EOP will be celebrating 10 years of existence at San Diego State University-Imperial Valley campus this spring. He said the program has definitely grown since 2001.

“We started with 30 students and we’re close to 200 now,” Yacopi said. “We’re trying to get as many as we can.”

Yacopi said EOP staff from San Diego State’s main campus will be joining the SDSU-IV crew at the EOP orientation today for new students and transfer students.

“They will be coming from San Diego to welcome and inform students. (It goes to show that) we’re all part of the big EOP family even though we’re out here on the desert,” he said, noting that this is the third year SDSU-IV has an EOP commencement ceremony.

Freshman students are already excited about what the Educational Opportunity Program has to offer.

“What really caught my attention is it’s a great program with a wonderful purpose behind it, especially for first-generation students,” incoming freshman Briana Barajas, a Brawley Union High School graduate, said.

“It is difficult making that transition from high school to university and it’s wonderful knowing that EOP is a support system that’s there to help you,” she said.

“So far my experience with EOP staff has been great; they feel more like a family than a staff,” the new liberal studies major said.

Though Yacopi said students who have already been accepted to SDSU cannot apply for EOP, he said future students are encouraged to apply.

Students interested in the program should check the designated EOP box while applying for a California State University school at the Web site www.csumentor.edu

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