

SCHOOL of SOCIAL SCIENCES

where I make a difference

COGNITIVE SCIENCES IN THE COMMUNITY

HABLA

Building verbal, math and science fundamentals is the main goal of the HABLA program – an acronym for Home-based Activities and Building Language Acquisition. Founded in 2000 by cognitive sciences professor Virginia Mann, the program trains home visitors to help Orange County’s Spanish-speaking parents prepare their toddlers for kindergarten. The program coaches parents to read and play with their children while incorporating program lessons into their daily lives - all in their native Spanish language. The idea is that children who are proficient in their home language will be better equipped to pick up English in school. The program has grown to serve more than 1,000 families in Anaheim, Garden Grove and Tustin, and can be adapted to serve other immigrant communities in California and beyond.

Global Connect

Global Connect is an educational partnership program that addresses short-comings in 8-12 international studies education. UCI faculty and students develop global issue-focused lesson plans and teach the material alongside high school teachers in the Newport Mesa and Saddleback School Districts. High school students get to learn about issues such as terrorism, gross domestic product, and AIDS in Africa from UCI experts known internationally for their research in these areas. The curriculum is updated each year to account for the continually changing global landscape. At the end of the semester, the high schoolers get to visit campus and become university students for a day. The program is UCI’s first to become an established academic course for California’s schools.

Jumpstart

Jumpstart is a national outreach program aimed at helping pre-school students develop language, literacy and social skills. UCI’s site station, championed by cognitive scientist Virginia Mann, pairs undergraduates – nearly 100 this year - with low-income pre-school students in Costa Mesa and Santa Ana. The college students play games, read books and participate in other group activities with their pre-schoolers to help them improve skills critical for success in school and overall development. The program also promotes family involvement in students’ educational goals by keeping parents updated on progress and providing activities they can work on together at home. Since it’s founding seven years ago, the social sciences site station has provided mentors to nearly 600 pre-school students.

Science Teaching in the Community

In addition to organized outreach programs, UCI cognitive scientists actively engage in community-focused activities designed to enhance public awareness of and interest in science. Efforts include Alyssa Brewer’s Brain Day Program at local K-2 classrooms where students participate in hands-on activities to learn what the brain does and how injuries and diseases can impact behavior. For Jeff Krichmar, visits to local K-8 classrooms with his LEGO robotics kits provide a great opportunity to showcase a fun side of science and technology as students build individual battery-powered robots and learn how technology can be used to understand human behavior. Cognitive scientists at UCI also host community lectures throughout the year in order to share cutting-edge research findings in brain science.