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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SMASH Scholars Complete STEM College Tour

San Francisco, April 6, 2010 – Level Playing Field Institute (LPFI) took twelve of its Summer Math and Science Honors Academy (SMASH) Students on a STEM-focused (science, math, technology and engineering) Southern California college tour last week. They visited UC Irvine, University of Redlands, Harvey Mudd, Cal Tech, UCLA and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

LPFI's SMASH Academy supports high-achieving, low-income, underrepresented high school students of color in the San Francisco Bay Area to excel and pursue careers in science, technology, engineering and math. The program also prepares them to apply to, and succeed in, four-year colleges and universities.

Julian Martinez, LPFI's Academic Programs Director:

"I am extremely excited to have its SMASH scholars complete a STEM focused college tour. For the scholars it signals the completion of four years of intensive academic work and focus toward an education goal in STEM. For LPFI it is just another example of removing barriers to access and full participation."

The scholars' dedication and academic achievement paid off as all the campuses visited opened their doors and welcomed them by giving them private tours and dedicated time with admissions officials. Among the tour's highlights was having our students told by UC Irvine Vice Chancellor Manuel Gomez "As first-generation, university-bound students of color who are interested in STEM, you are as precious as gold. You belong here."

Each year LPFI selects approximately 25 outstanding low-income students of color from under-resourced public Bay Area high schools to participate in SMASH's three-year program. SMASH students spend five weeks of each summer in UC Berkeley dorms and are immersed in rigorous STEM classes. SMASH students also receive year-round academic support including SAT prep, college counseling and financial aid workshops, a speaker series and other activities like this college tour to ensure continued academic success.

SMASH Scholar Megan Gage blogged on SMASH's Communication and Social Technology student-run site www.smashcast.org during the tour: "The most exciting part: everything planned for the following week was planned for the utmost relevancy to our lives. We will be looking at school with a special interest in STEM related fields (science, technology, engineering and math). We have events planned with people of color (just like us) who work in these fields of interest as well!"

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"Studying STEM in college, I thought I'd be working alone in a super competitive environment but it was great to learn that there are schools that focus heavily on collaborative work." – 2010 SMASH Scholar

About Level Playing Field Institute

Level Playing Field Institute (www.lpfi.org) is a Bay Area-based non-profit organization that works to increase fairness in education and the workplace by administering education programs and conducting workplace research aimed to identify and remove barriers to full participation. LPFI is funded by private donors, foundations and corporate giving.

LPFI runs two education programs, the Summer Math and Science Honors (SMASH) Academy for high-achieving low-income high school students of color in the Bay Area and the Initiative for Diversity in Education and Leadership (IDEAL) Scholars program for low-income underrepresented students at the University of California at Berkeley. Our vision is that all students, regardless of socio-economic status, have the opportunity to apply to and graduate from top colleges and universities.

LPFI's workplace fairness program develops tools and research to mitigate bias in the workplace for women, people of color, and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender professionals and to reframe the discussion about workplace diversity to focus on fairness.

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