



LEVEL PLAYING FIELD INSTITUTE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Level Playing Field Institute's SMASH Academy Receives Grant from Verizon

\$30,000 grant to help close opportunity gap for students of color in STEM

San Francisco, January 10, 2011 – Level Playing Field Institute is the recipient of a \$30,000 grant from The Verizon Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Verizon, to support its Summer Math and Science Honors Academy (SMASH) on the UC Berkeley and Stanford campuses, and its year-round Communications and Social Technology program (SMASHCAST) for SMASH scholars.

SMASH provides high-achieving, low-income, high school students of color with three years of rigorous science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) summer courses and year-round academic and mentoring support. SMASH prepares young scholars to excel in STEM fields so that they can enter and succeed in selective colleges and graduate schools.

"I am thrilled that Verizon shares our belief in the urgency of providing high achieving students of color with access to challenging STEM coursework, specifically preparing them for high-tech careers of the future," said Level Playing Field Institute Executive Director Robert Schwartz, Ed.D. "Our partnership will help close the opportunity gap for hundreds of African American, Latino/a, Native American, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students who show great promise to be our future technology leaders."

The students selected for SMASH have strong aptitude for STEM subjects and are often among the top students at their high schools. Nevertheless, because of a lack of resources both at school and home to prepare them for college, they face significant barriers to navigate a path to genuine academic achievement and learning. With this important support from Verizon, SMASH scholars receive the education and access to technology resources that allow them to compete with students from more advantageous circumstances.

About SMASH Academy (www.lpfi.org/smash)

The Summer Math & Science Honors Academy began on the UC Berkeley campus in 2004 to close the STEM opportunity gap for students of color. Currently serving more than 200 scholars and alumni, SMASH is expanding to college campuses nationwide.

About SMASHCAST (<http://www.smashcast.org/>)

SMASHCAST is the Communications And Social Technology program of SMASH. The class meets on two Saturdays each month, year-round, providing students with an opportunity to further their interests in new media. Students use their proclivity for math and science to explore media technology and create video projects. SMASHCAST was recently hired by the [UNITY Journalists](#) of color to document their NewU Startup Camp.

About Level Playing Field Institute (www.lpfi.org)

Level Playing Field Institute is a Bay Area-based non-profit organization that works to increase fairness in education and the workplace by closing the opportunity gap.

About the Verizon Foundation (<http://foundation.verizon.com>)

The Verizon Foundation aims to improve literacy and strengthen educational achievement for children and adults by preparing them for success in the 21st Century. The Foundation invests in education and literacy initiatives that leverage innovative technology and interactive learning to increase 21st century skills for children and adults.

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