

# K-12 Outreach Presents “GEARUP4COLLEGE”

The Office of K-12 Outreach at Auburn University, in partnership with the Youth Programs division in the Office of Professional and Continuing Education, facilitates GEAR UP Alabama, or GUA, and GEAR UP Birmingham City Schools, or GUBCS. Federal grants awarded by the U.S. Department of Education to the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Birmingham City Schools to provide summer camps for children from Alabama’s Black Belt counties and Birmingham City Schools.

The goal of these summer camps is to help public school students in grades 7 and 8 increase their college/university exposure. Their time spent on college campuses during their week-long stays helps the students connect with the goals of GUA and GEAR UP in developing lasting academic relationships to increase the chance for success in post-secondary environments.

In the inaugural summer of GEAR UP camps and campus tour visits, almost 300 students across 18 school districts around the state were served. Camps ranged from general exposure to campus life such as College and Career Readiness camp and the Black Belt Legacy camp to thematic camps such as Chef Tech and Computer Science 4 All Girls.

Students had the opportunity to stay in dorms on campus and eat in the on-campus dining halls. Those camps with a general theme allowed the students to visit numerous departments on campus and be exposed to the academic offerings through short lectures or presentations. Whenever possible, hands-on activities helped the students to gain a better understanding of the discipline they were studying or showed them how to apply what was being taught in the real world. The theme-based or more focused camps, such as Chef



Tech, allowed the students to get into the environment, in this case the kitchen, and learn from the chef directly what it takes to select the food, prepare it, follow safety regulations and present the food for consumption. Other camps such as Jr. Sports Science camp allowed the students to discover the fields of exercise science, physical activity, and sport performance.

As GEAR UP summer camps continue over the next six years, a goal will be to incorporate more variety and diversity in the camp offerings and enhance their participation in various curriculum and activities. A focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) will guide the programming to include not just the science and math components but also bring the arts. Future camps will focus on music production, theatrical presentation and vocal performance. It is also the goal to send these students to other campuses in Alabama and possibly out of state to give them exposure to what post-secondary education has for them and the many career paths that they can explore as they mature.

For those students who did not attend a camp or were part of our on-site school programs, GEAR UP facilitates campus visits to any of the higher education institutions near the districts or schools. Visits to Auburn University or Troy University were facilitated through our GUA coordinator at Auburn University, Tanja Matthews, and executed by admissions office representatives or school ambassadors. The tours included mostly walking through the campus and being exposed to the various landmarks, buildings and points of interest for the students.

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