

Teens discover their future

Some high school students are cut out for the college experience. Others prefer different career options.

But for 57 students from 11 Nevada counties, the 2008 Discover Your Future program opened their eyes and gave them a weeklong taste of life on the University of Nevada, Reno campus. Ranging in career interests from engineering to science, teens attended the annual University of Nevada Cooperative Extension 4-H program, June 15-19.

“Discover the tremendous opportunity you have,” University Provost Marc Johnson told the students during the closing banquet. “You already expressed your desire by coming to Discover Your Future because you wanted to learn more than you were getting from school. You have already shown deliberate desire to build your future.”

The high schoolers experienced college life at its best. “We have a balanced program that seems to be meeting their needs. They met new friends and enjoyed college life,” said Steve Schaffer, state 4-H program coordinator.

Thomas Ranson '08 (journalism) was an intern with Cooperative Extension when he wrote this story.

“I liked everything from classes to the dorms,” said Chance

Haworth, a 14-year-old freshman at Pahrana-gat Valley High School in Alamo. “I liked the (earthquake) shake tables the most because the cement would break and explode into pieces. I could use engineering to help people if they're stuck.”

Not only did they eat on campus, but students attended three two-hour class sessions (college tracks) in their major field of interest. On the last day, youth from three fields (engineering, technology, science) gave presentations to fellow participants and faculty, showing how they took advantage of



Tyler Roll, a teen in the engineering track, controls a robot during the 4-H Discover Your Future program in summer 2008, with Warren Andersen, 4-H military and technology assistant.

the instruction. Students also got a glimpse of work options at the career fair.

“We wanted to expose them to different

careers and fields of study,” Warren Andersen, 4-H military and technology assistant, said. “They learned to work well together and



Photo by Crista Hecht

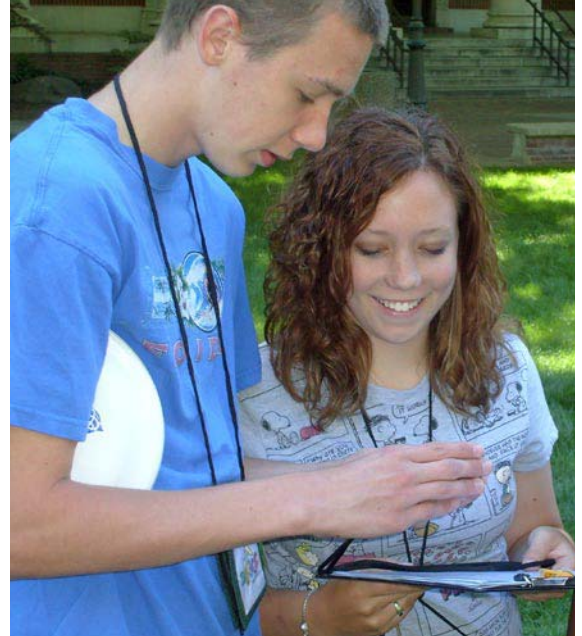


Photo by Thomas Hanson

Teens in the Discover Your Future engineering track learn about maneuvering robots. RIGHT: Phillip Farris of Nye County and Amanda VanPelt of Lyon County use GPS devices to track Frisbees for a map they will develop on the computer.

expand their horizons as they find interest in a career.”

The University knows how important it is for high school students to continue their education at the next level. Professors didn’t hesitate to help the teens gain a better perspective about classes and college life.

College of Education professor David Thomas gave the technology group its first lesson of the week. He gave a brief introduction on the history of mathematics and then segued into remote sensing.

“We have something better than sand and sticks,” Thomas said about technology and math. “We have something that’s free—GeoGebra (a program used to test axioms).” Thomas let students experiment with models that test certain scenarios, like AIDS or wildfires, over a period of time.

“What’s happening is the individuals are all getting infected,” Thomas said after generating a 50-week simulation of the AIDS model in three minutes. “How could you use this model to describe this terrible problem? You can see what is most effective in preventing spreading

of the disease. This has huge social implications.”

Geography instructor Patrick Guiberson introduced GPS navigation to the students in the technology group. They used the device to track and map Frisbees they threw across the lower quad. In the final part of the exercise, Guiberson asked the students to create maps in the computer lab. “We used the GPS equipment to mark locations outside and then take that information and put it on the computer,” Guiberson said. “Hopefully when they learn about this technology, they realize it’s not just for geography majors. Education is not only in books. You have to get your feet wet.”

In the University’s Seismology Laboratory, the teens learned about the recent swarm of earthquakes in the Truckee Meadows. In the College of Agriculture, Biotechnology and Natural Resources, professor Dale Holcombe led the dissection of a beef heart, and assistant professor Mike Teglas conducted the dissection of an eyeball. Students in the life sciences, maneuvered robots and toured the heat and cooling plants.

Youth also experienced the other side of college life—socializing. Recreational activities at Rancho San Rafael and Lombardi Recreation Center enabled the teens to exercise and hang out with new friends.

William Mehm and Dennis Dobies from Truckee Meadows Community College delivered a magic show for a fun twist on education. They captured the banquet audience with their illusions and then explained the presentation.

“Magic has been around since the time of the Egyptians,” said Mehm, a science professor at TMCC. “Many spiritualists did magic tricks to make them seem like they had special powers. The paranormal has an enormous attraction. People are just absolutely drawn to it.”

A waiting list for next year’s 4-H program has already formed after Discover Your Future attracted the largest student numbers in its three years. For more information, contact your local Cooperative Extension office in Nevada, Steve Schafer at (775) 784-6207, or schafers@unce.unr.edu. **N**