GeoFORCE Students Prepare for SAT/PSAT

Eighty Southwest Texas students from the University of Texas at Austin's Jackson School of Geosciences GeoFORCE Texas program met in Uvalde recently to participate in a SAT/PSAT test taking strategy session. “Having good scores on their required entrance exam is important for these students when they apply for acceptance into college,” GeoFORCE program coordinator Julie Spink said. “We wanted to make this training available to help them get a head start on their preparations.”

Area freshmen and sophomores, selected previously for the GeoFORCE Texas summer academy program, took part in the event held in the SWTJC Matthews Student Center. Area communities represented include: Brackettville, Camp Wood, Carrizo Springs, Cotulla, Crystal City, Del Rio, Dilley, Eagle Pass, Hondo, Leakey, Pearsall, Sabinal, Utopia and Uvalde.

Scott Lackey of Carrizo Springs High School attended the event, along with Crystal City High School students Victoria Gomez, Ramon Lopez, Alex Perez, Maricruz Bustamante and Adrianna Vargas.

Marisela Aguirre of Rackspace Managed Hosting, an internationally based web hosting company based in San Antonio, conducted the strategy session hosted by the Jackson School and Southwest Texas Junior College. Aguirre holds a Bachelor's degree in English from George Washington University in Washington and a Master's degree in political science from the University of Texas at San Antonio.

A native of San Antonio, Aguirre's resume includes internships with Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and Senator Edwards Kennedy. She has worked as director of the student leadership institute for the Alamo Community College District and as a special assistant to San Antonio Mayor Phil Hardberger.

After a short introduction by Aguirre, GeoFORCE students began their strategy session taking 25 minute math and reading sections of the test using the official SAT Practice Test (2006-2007).
created by The College Board SAT Program.

Upon completion of the first two sections, Aguirre explained technical and content facets of the test and then went through the sections students had completed outlining a variety of strategy and test-taking tips.

Later in the day, the process was repeated with additional math and writing sections of the practice test.

Also included in the day's activities were several group vocabulary games such as "Toss the Word," "Vocab Bingo" and "Vocab Pictionary." The session on math strategies included a team "Math Jeopardy" competition.

At the conclusion of the daylong strategy session, students filled out an evaluation on the usefulness of the information they received.

"The overall response was very favorable and we received some good input on what information the students thought was most helpful," GeoFORCE coordinator Spinkus said.

According to Spink one of the student's comments seemed to reflect the feelings of many of the participants.

"Before today, I thought that the SAT was useless, just a test," the student wrote. "I knew I had to study, but I thought I'd be ready when the time came. Now I know that I will have to study really hard and I didn't know how stressful it is. I know I still have a lot to learn but this was very helpful."

GeoFORCE Texas encourages students with high aptitude in math and science to consider careers in the geosciences. Students selected for the program participate in a week-long summer academics blending college preparatory coursework with hands-on field trips to sites of geological interest around the country.

The program's long-term goals include increasing the number of students - specifically minorities and females - who enter into the geosciences and increasing awareness of the importance of Earth science in everyday life.

Sponsored by UT Austin's Jackson School of Geosciences and SWTJC, funding for the program is provided by industry sponsors Shell, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, Chevron, BP, AT&T Foundation, Dominion, Halliburton, Marathon Oil, Minerals Management Services, Schlumberger, Swift Energy Company and Alcoa.

For more information about the program, contact Julie Spinkus, program coordinator at the Jackson School of Geosciences: (512) 471-4360, jspinkus@jsg.utexas.edu or visit the GeoFORCE Texas website at http://www.jsg.utexas.edu/geoforce/index.html.