
Jackson school hosts aspiring geoscientists

Regina Philip

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GeoForce Texas, a summer program designed to recruit high school students to the University's Jackson School of Geosciences, is providing 245 high school students with trips to different areas of the United States to learn about geosciences through hands-on experience.

Kimberely Demaree of Dilley High School was in ninth grade when she participated in GeoForce last summer. She said the program increased her interest in pursuing a career as a professional geoscientist.

"I enjoyed it so much," Demaree said. "I went to places that my family hasn't even been to and learned about things other than how beautiful they are."

This summer, ninth and 10th-grade students will travel to sites in Texas, Arizona, Utah and Washington, D.C, while 11th graders visit sites in Washington and Oregon. The all-expenses paid program is underway and will end in July.

Doug Ratcliff, associate director of the Geology Foundation at the Jackson School of Geosciences, introduced the program to the college three years ago. He said the goal of the geoscience college preparatory classes is to increase diversity within the field and inspire young students to pursue a college degree in geosciences.

Departments in the Jackson School include the Department of Geological Sciences, the Bureau of Economic Geology and the UT Institute for Geophysics.

The program is open to incoming ninth through 12th-grade students who maintain a B average in all their math and science classes. A selection committee reviews thousand application essays and chooses students from a wide range of backgrounds. Once they are chosen, the students travel through seven states accompanied by professors and professional geoscientists, who teach them about the different facets of geosciences.



Jackson School spokesman J.B. Bird said the key to the program is the combination of taking classes and learning through experience outside in the field.

Bird said the program was modeled after the math and science program at Fort Valley State University in Georgia. He said various oil and gas companies are major participants in the program and hope the geosciences field will become more diverse and popular for future students.


"There are a lot of television shows about doctors and none for geoscientists," Bird said. "So we brought this program to Texas in order to get students pumped up about the possible careers in geosciences."

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