FAU College of Medicine Pilot Program Prepares Underserved High School Students for Careers in Health Sciences and Medicine

Nineteen students from Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties have successfully completed the three-year pilot program and have been accepted for freshman admission to FAU

BOCA RATON, FL (April 14, 2011) — After completing Florida Atlantic University’s first, three-year pilot program designed to prepare underserved and underrepresented students for careers in medicine and the health sciences, 19 high school students from Fort Pierce Central in St. Lucie County and Lake Worth High School in Palm Beach County were recently accepted for freshman admission at FAU. The “Healthcare Careers Outreach Program,” administered by FAU’s Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, is an after-school and Saturday initiative designed to increase interest in the health sciences fields for young people interested in careers in medicine, and mentor and prepare them to successfully compete at the highest levels of college and post-graduate studies.

Among the students who participated in the three-year program are Kasey Taylor from Fort Pierce Central and Ludnie Excellent from Lake Worth High School. “We learned about ourselves and were given the opportunity to step into the life of a medical student—an experience that most teenagers don’t get to have,” said Taylor. “The program directed our paths to where we want to go with our lives, and it was an adventure.” Taylor is looking forward to beginning her freshman year at FAU in fall 2011 and was also awarded FAU’s “Presidential Scholarship,” a distinguished scholarship award that provides $4,000 per year, renewable for four years based on performance.

The three-year pilot offered the students several high-level learning opportunities during their sophomore, junior and senior years of high school. In preparation for rigorous college-level study, they were taught research methods and conducted formal presentations on topics such as the digestive, circulatory and respiratory systems, learning styles and chronic diseases. The group took field trips to FAU’s Boca Raton campus, where they examined cadavers and worked with state-of-the art human simulator mannequins. Visits to Scripps Florida on FAU’s John D. MacArthur campus in Jupiter, allowed the students to interact with researchers there, and learn more about disease treatment and prevention. Many of the activities were designed to encourage the students to think “outside of the box” and to move beyond their comfort zones.
“We have witnessed a transformation in these students, as their initial interests in healthcare-related careers have developed into passions,” said Gloria Zimmerman, Ph.D., program manager of the pilot study. “They have built on their confidence, teamwork skills, leadership qualities, character and maturity. They have also discovered their individual learning styles, which will help them a great deal throughout their academic careers.”

As a result of the success of this pilot program, the College is developing a new program for underrepresented and underserved middle and high school students. “We want to ensure that talented, young students are exposed to careers in medicine and healthcare and that they have access to vital programs like ours, which prepare them for careers in healthcare,” said Mark Goldstein, executive director of the College of Medicine’s Simulation Center, a state-of-the-art laboratory that uses sophisticated simulation and trainer technologies to educate new physicians, residents, nurses, first responders and healthcare students.

In spring 2011, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine was granted preliminary accreditation by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education to offer an independent medical education program which will welcome its charter class to the new medical school in fall 2011.

For more information about the College of Medicine, visit http://med.fau.edu.

Photo Caption: High school students from Lake Worth High School and Fort Pierce Central complete FAU’s first, three-year pilot program designed to increase interest in the health sciences fields for young people interested in careers in medicine. Pictured in the center (blonde hair) is Kasey Taylor, who was also awarded the “Presidential Scholarship,” and Ludnie Excellent (second row, second from the right near the flagpole).
About Florida Atlantic University:

Florida Atlantic University, established in 1961, officially opened its doors in 1964 as the fifth public university in Florida. In commemoration of its origin, FAU is celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout 2011. Today, the University serves more than 28,000 undergraduate and graduate students on seven campuses and sites. FAU’s world-class teaching and research faculty serves students through 10 colleges: the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts & Letters, the College of Business, the College for Design and Social Inquiry, the College of Education, the College of Engineering & Computer Science, the Graduate College, the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine, the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing and the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science. FAU is ranked as a High Research Activity institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. For more information, visit www.fau.edu.