

High school students finish week of study with day of tubing



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Students enrolled in the University of Florida's Center for Precollegiate Education and Training's summer science camp enter the Ichetucknee River on July 17.

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The last day of class for high school students attending a University of Florida summer science camp had less to do with microscopes and more to do with just plain fun.

Twenty-four 10th-grade students from all over Florida went tubing on the Ichetucknee River on Friday on their final day of a week-long exposure to science and college life.

The 8th Annual Science Quest program, which is for rising high school juniors with a love for science, will be repeated this week at UF.

The program offers students the opportunity to experience college while stimulating interest in the collegiate departments and careers based in the biological, physical and molecular sciences, according to Erin Kelso, head of Science Quest.

"Some want to be doctors and some don't know what they want to be yet," she said about the participants. "They come to learn all different types of science."

The program, hosted by the UF Center for Precollegiate Education and Training, or CPET, is not based on classroom lessons, according to Kelso.

Instead, Science Quest gives the 48 students participating over two weeks the chance to tour laboratories, speak to science professors and perform experiments, she said.

The group of 10th-graders will also get to don hard hats with flashlights and explore a cave, she said, adding to the hands-on approach of the program. They'll also get to have a fun day, which includes tubing at the Ichetucknee River.

The Science Quest participants live at the residence hall on campus for the week and have their meals at the dining halls, according to Kelso, enhancing their collegiate experience.

The program receives about 200 applications every year from students all over Florida, she said. Much like a college entrance application, teacher recommendations as well as a short essay about why they wanted to attend were required.

"These kids are usually all highly achieving students," she said. "But other than that, they're all of different backgrounds and interests."

This most recent group of talented 10th-graders will join the 384 other students that have participated in Science Quest since it began in 2002, according to Kelso.

CPET, which hosts this and other related events like Gator Lab for middle schoolers, is a university-wide organization that connects college resources in science, math and technology to school teachers and students.

"I think it's a great program," said Kelso, who is in her second year as head of Science Quest. "At first the kids are hesitant, but then they make friends and end up having a good time."