

High School Students Complete CAUSES Summer Bridge in Environment and Sustainability Program

Washington, D.C. - On July 26, almost 30 D.C. junior and senior high school students completed the Summer Bridge Program in Environment and Sustainability, presenting the findings of their capstone projects before an audience and receiving certificates of completion. A University of the District of Columbia program, Summer Bridge is a collaborative effort between the Center for 4-H and Youth Development and the Water Resources Research Institute, which are both program offices in the College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES).



Led by Dr. Tolessa Deksissa, the four week Summer Bridge Program offered students a hands-on opportunity to research the world around them. Dr. Deksissa is the director of the Water Resources Research Institute and the Principal Investigator (PI) of the Summer Bridge Program, which was funded through a grant from the National Science Foundation. Co-investigators are Drs. Lily Liang, Suzan Harkness and Pradeep Behera, who taught classes in environmental and sustainability science, mobile technologies, cloud computing, engineering design and a capstone project course.

“All children are naturally inquisitive and born to succeed. Our hands-on Summer Bridge Program in environmental science and sustainability focuses on learning, problem solving, discovery and teambuilding to re-ignite this natural curiosity. This helps underserved students to succeed.”

The final project presentations demonstrated just how the students embraced the challenge of questioning the world around them, from testing the differences in the quality of tap water and bottled water, to testing the contaminants in the Rock Creek and the Potomac River, to analyzing whether the soil found on the UDC campus was suitable for growing tomatoes.

“It’s amazing to see the growth that these young students have shown during the course of the Summer Bridge Program. It is truly impressive,” commented Rebecca Bankhead, 4-H Program Director and State Program Leader for the District.

Addressing the students, CAUSES Dean Sabine O’Hara said, “Discovery is a lifelong process, and you are learning to enjoy discovering new things. By questioning your perceived answers, you learned many new things. This kind of questioning and learning will help you to succeed anywhere.”

The Summer Bridge Program in Environment and Sustainability was designed to provide junior and senior high school students and incoming college students with interactive experience in laboratory analysis, field study and

computer applications. The program culminated in a capstone project. This year's Summer Bridge program was designed to encourage participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) disciplines among youth in the District of Columbia.

The Center for 4-H and Youth Development creates innovative programs that emphasize experiential learning opportunities for young people and their families. Through hands-on interactive programming, participants develop life skills, leadership abilities, and an ethic of civic stewardship.

The Water Resources Research Institute provides the District of Columbia with interdisciplinary research support to identify D.C. water resource problems and contribute to their solution. The Institute supports collaborative research that engages not only faculty members and students, but also a broad array of stakeholders to address regional water issues in a holistic way. For more information, contact Dr. Sabine O'Hara at sabine.ohara@udc.edu.