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Intelligence Community Biosecurity Summer High School Program

Norfolk, Virginia- This past July, the Norfolk State University's Intelligence Community for Academic Excellence hosted a two-week program 36 high School Students. As in previous years, the students were given many opportunities to learn about careers in the intelligence community, the importance of the web in the changing times, gain first-hand experience in research conducted under the direction of a research scientist; gain exposure to a number of structured activities including field trips, workshops and laboratory demonstrations, and instruction in career development, technical and scientific writing and public speaking. The laboratory training and demonstrations were conducted by Dr. Malikah Abdullah (Assistant Professor of Biology, Norfolk State University). In addition to all of this the students participated in a pilot online Arabic class, to whet their appetite for languages that differed from the traditional ones learned in school. An intelligence analysis from the Marine Corp spoke to the students and encouraged to learn "hard" languages, or languages that the government would be drawn to because of their need for particular language skills as a result of their international affairs in those particular countries. Many students became very interested in Arabic and several have completed the on-line training and Dr. Okpodu (the director of the NSU IC-CAE program) is looking to work with the local school board to see if these students can receive credit for language instruction.

Throughout their time in the program the students were asked to work collaboratively and research a particular disease in a group and relate that to biosecurity. These final presentations were given at the closing ceremony on Friday, July 29, 2011. Six students from the 2010 summer program were asked to return as peer-mentors. The peer-mentors worked on a water quality research project. The peer-mentors were asked to create presentations on the availability of water in the Middle East, China and Japan. They also worked with two undergraduate students who completed an actual research project dealing with water quality and the creation of biosensors for testing water quality in Virginia Water. All research projects were mentored by Dr. Camellia Moses Okpodu (Professor of Biology and Director of the NSU IC-CAE Program) and presented at the Friday closing ceremony for the parents.

One of the highlights for the 2-weeks for both programs was the trip to Goddard Space Museum and the NSA Cryptology Museum (Beltsville, MD). The students were able to learn about the history of spying, look at real life gadgets, learn about specific spies, etc. After this experience the students were asked to write a report of what they learned and what was a highlight for them during the summer. As was done in the 2010 summer program, an emphasis was placed upon learning to use the web responsibly. In particular, participants learned more about the web and both the negative and positive consequences that can result from the use of the computer. The students were able to listen to an essay in the 2010 NSU IC-CAE Proceedings written by Miss Koren-Grace Okpodu, (a 12th grader at Norfolk Collegiate School, Norfolk, VA) who had experienced cyber bullying. The participants learned that cyber-bullying is a new form of bullying done over the web that is becoming very prevalent in middle and high schools. After the reading of the article, students participated in a forum to discuss some of the things touched upon in the essay.

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