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Young Ladies Learn About Careers In Math, Science

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By Ashleigh Oldland, Staff Writer



SMARTIES. A group of young female students learn about engineering at a previous event at California State University, Long Beach event. —Photo courtesy Gregory Gossage

Eighth grader Julie Liner might grow up to be an engineer.

To help her decide if engineering is the career for her, the 13-year-old is one of 10 female students chosen to participate next week in California State University, Long Beach's first Engineering Girls Internship.

"The reason I applied is because I wanted to learn more about engineering and I knew it would look good on high school applications," said Liner, who is going into her last year of studies at Newcomb Academy. "I'm looking forward to learning about the different fields in engineering."

Liner and other eighth grade girls chosen from an applicant pool of nearly 150 students from Long Beach and neighboring cities, were chosen because they excel in math and science courses, said Lily Gossage, director of CSULB's College of Engineering Recruitment and Retention Center.

"Overall in professional practice, less than 10% of engineers are women," Gossage said. Which is why CSULB is hosting the weeklong residential internship program and encouraging young ladies to enter the profession.

Although she is not an engineer, Gossage is the diversity chair for the Women in Engineering Proactive Network. She also is an educational counselor and former math and science teacher. She said her passion is advocating for marginalized populations.

"We can see the stark disparity early on... Research shows us that we lose girls in the eighth or ninth grade," Gossage said. "If you look at the high schools, the folks taking the hard-core math and science classes are boys."

The internship is meant to encourage girls who are academically advanced to become more interested in math, science and engineering. Gossage said she will be tracking the girls for the next eight years — through what would be their senior year in college — to see if the young ladies pursue related careers.

Young participants in the program will learn about engineering fields from several CSULB faculty members. The program includes classroom-style learning, laboratory-based activities and field trips to the Port of Los Angeles and the Long Beach Airport. NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) educational content is incorporated into the program to introduce students to the fields of space exploration and scientific research.

The Engineering Girls Internship is a pilot program sponsored by CSULB's Center for Human Factors in Advanced Aeronautics Technologies. The center is paid for by a \$5 million (\$1 million each year) grant from NASA.

CSULB has three other related programs to encourage young girls to learn more about careers that use math and science: Women Engineers at the Beach, Engineering Girls at the Beach and the NASA Learning Experience. The NASA Learning Experience is a new program that starts in July and will take 30 elementary school girls on a field trip to Florida to watch a space shuttle launch.

Engineering companies and professionals and those from other organizations are welcomed and encouraged to sponsor future programs, school officials said. For more information about the Engineering Girls Internship, visit www.chaat.cla.csulb.edu.