

Tech Camp Goes Global

CEPS student, faculty bring STEM to South African camp for girls

Friday, December 1, 2017



UNH STUDENT SALIMAH HUSSIEN '18 AND ERIN BELL, CHAIR OF THE UNH DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING, WITH TECH CAMPERS ON A BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION PROJECT SITE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

This past summer three members of the UNH community helped forge a stronger international science and engineering connection during a [visit](#) to the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.

[Bioengineering](#) student Salimah Hussien '18 joined associate professors Robert Henry and Erin Bell of the [department of civil and environmental engineering](#) to serve as a mentor and help

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facilitate activities at the First Avenue Institute's Girls Winter Camp. Twenty middle and high school students from the Soweto area of Johannesburg, where the 1976 apartheid uprising began, attended the camp.

The institute aims to stimulate interest in STEM fields among economically disadvantaged girls. Developing a pipeline of young people interested in STEM careers will help the country tackle challenges associated with power generation, water supply, transportation infrastructure and other issues.

The UNH team assisted in delivering seven days of camp activities, including a day devoted to civil engineering programming topped with a [visit to a bridge construction project](#).

"The girls camp showed me that a small effort goes a long way," says Hussien, who is from Ethiopia. "Participating in an international outreach program designed to encourage girls to pursue STEM careers is an important part of the work we do at UNH."

Though Hussien visited South Africa previously, she was excited about the chance to return to connect with young aspiring engineers and carry out the mission of the National Society of Black Engineers — she previously served as president of the UNH chapter.

"I thought this project was a great fit because of my understanding of the challenges and struggles that come with living in a developing country," says Hussien. "Since my background was similar to the girls, it made it easier for me to connect with them on a personal and professional level."

It was the third trip for Henry, who has served as one of the project leaders for the camp, which is modeled in part after UNH's own [Tech Camp](#). Held on the Durham campus each summer, Tech Camp has grown to serve more than 300 students annually.

“It is similar to what we experience with the UNH Engineeristas program,” Henry says. “The girls really appreciate having professional engineers show an interest in them.”

With each visit to South Africa, the collaboration between First Avenue Investment Management (the camp sponsor), the University of Johannesburg and UNH grows. Bell, who made her first visit this past summer, is in contact with



ROBERT HENRY AND ERIN BELL WITH CAMP PARTICIPANTS.

faculty at Johannesburg to develop research, education and outreach initiatives that will engage a wide range of faculty from both institutions.

“This collaboration will enrich the scholarly mission of both institutions as well as extend the impact of the Girls Winter Camp,” says Bell.

Henry believes the relationship will continue to grow, including the potential to bring more UNH students to the winter camp and to host girls from South Africa at a UNH Tech Camp in the near future.

“The opportunities for growth, international programs and research are huge,” says Henry. “This should have a major impact on the sustainability of the girl’s winter program as well as some very interesting opportunities for UNH students and faculty.

Support for the Tech Camp Goes Global initiative will provide opportunities for UNH students and faculty to bring urgently needed STEM materials to Girls Winter Camp participants in a community in great need of well-trained STEM professionals who

can address a myriad of infrastructure issues. To support the UNH outreach program with the University of Johannesburg in South Africa, [click here](#) and select "Tech Camp Goes Global," or contact [Michael McCarthy](#) at (603) 862-4412.

WRITTEN [Brooks Payette](#) | UNH College of Engineering and
BY: Physical Sciences | brooks.payette@unh.edu | 603-
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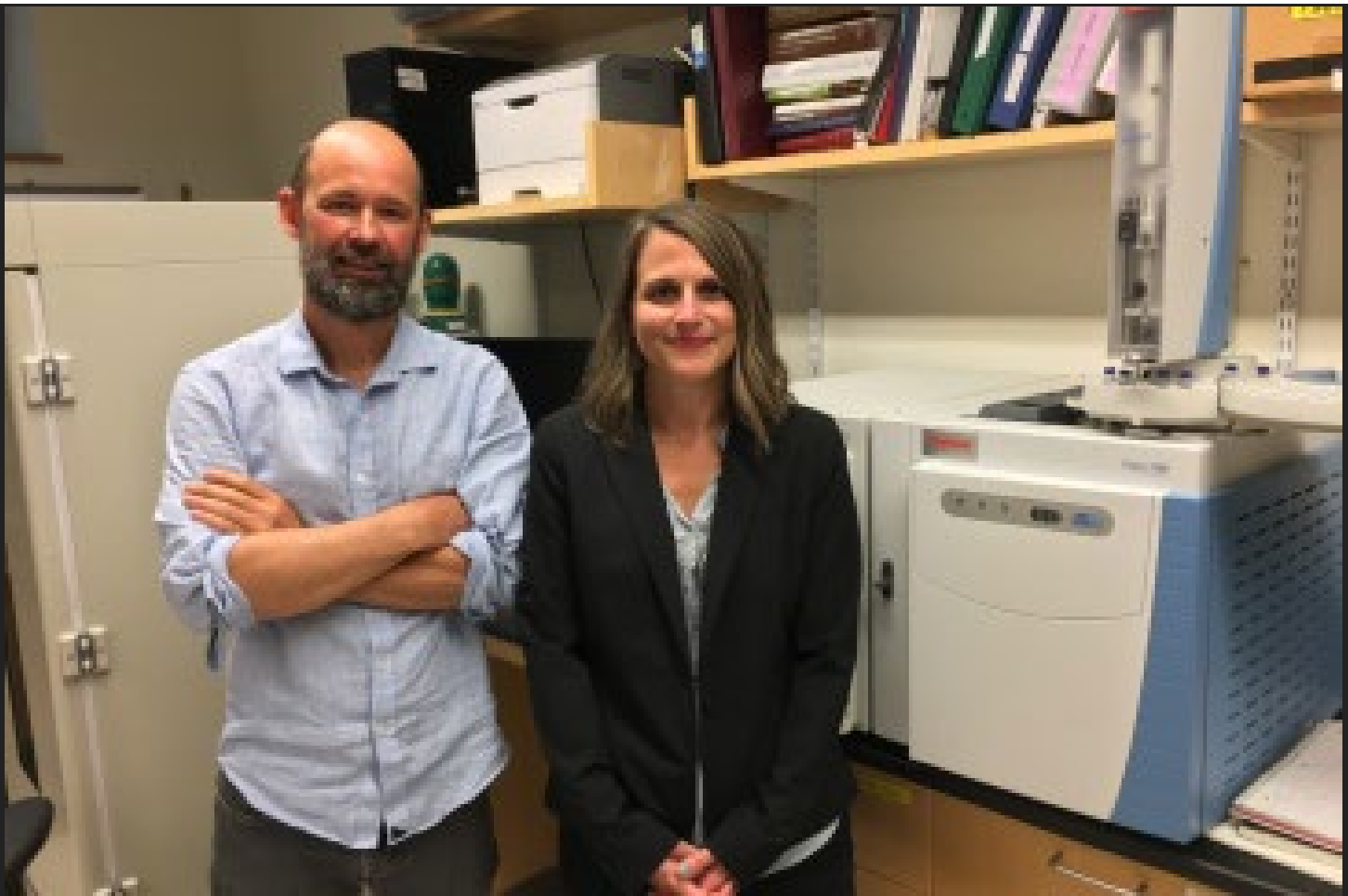
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