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'Budding' Scientists From Inner-City Schools To Study Plant Biotech At UNH July 20 - 28, 2008

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July 17, 2008

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DURHAM, N.H. - The University of New Hampshire will collaborate with the Harlem Children Society to provide a week of hands-on learning in plant biotechnology and other cutting-edge science fields to 35 promising high school science students from New York and New Jersey inner-city schools. The pilot program, called Project REIS (Research Experience In Science)@UNH, runs July 20 – 28 on the UNH campus in Durham.

“We’re pleased to pilot this partnership with the Harlem Children Society, which since 2000 has distinguished itself for nurturing and developing promising students from under-resourced and under-served communities and school districts with hands-on science and math opportunities,” says UNH professor of plant biology Subhash Minocha, who will lead the program. Minocha notes that Project REIS taps the experiences of Project SMART (Science and Mathematics Achievement through Research Training), which Minocha has directed at UNH for 17 years. The two programs may be integrated in the future.

During their week at UNH, the Project REIS students will explore plant biotechnology, biopharming, plant genetic engineering and genetically modified foods, biofuels, and bioremediation by plants. They will also discuss environmental, social, ethical and moral issues related to plant biotechnology and genetic engineering. In labs, they’ll work hands-on with plant cloning, plant chromosomes, gene transfer into bacteria, and testing genetically engineered foods. Field trips and additional seminars will introduce students to other areas of scientific strength at UNH, including marine and environmental sciences, nanotechnology, and space science.

“Project REIS will let us showcase UNH as a wonderful place to pursue a college education,” says Minocha. “For these students, most of whom have never left their neighborhoods, the opportunity to study science in our rural setting will be exciting.”

The Project REIS students will live in UNH residence halls and eat at Holloway Commons during the week. In addition, evening discussions will focus on college admissions, diversity issues, and careers in science. In addition to the resources of the Harlem Children Society, the UNH component of the program is supported by the National Science Foundation (NH EPSCoR and Career Fellowships to faculty), the NH Space Grant Consortium, the deans of the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture and College of Engineering and Physical Sciences, Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity, Center for High-rate Nanomanufacturing, Office of Admissions, Office of Multicultural Student Affairs, and the McNair Graduate Opportunity Program.
For more information about the program, visit www.smart.unh.edu. For information about the Harlem Children Society, go to www.harlemchildrensociety.org.

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