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### Pre-College Students STEaM to Future Career Success at Kean

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# Pre-College Students STEaM to Future Career Success at Kean

Aug 08, 2023

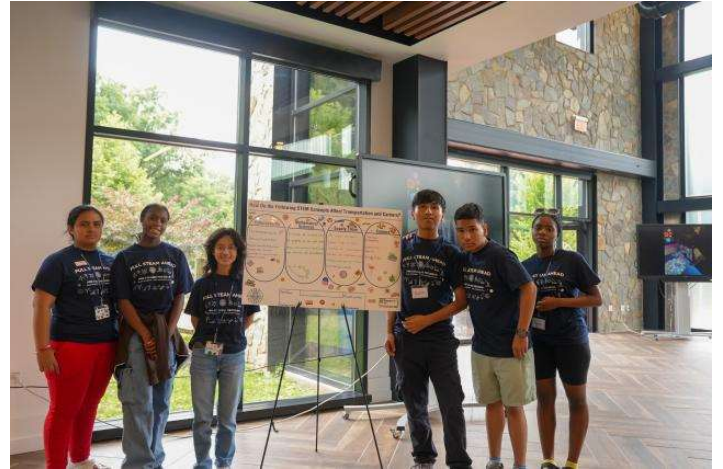


Pre-college students from Jersey City and Elizabeth explored potential careers in engineering, cybersecurity and other STEaM-related fields during a Kean University summer program sponsored by the Port Authority of NY & NJ and Kean's Office of Career Services.

The Full STEaM Ahead pilot program brought 25 middle and high school students to Kean's main campus for four weeks of classes, experiments, field trips and other experiences designed to build their skills in STEaM areas and ignite their interest in

future career paths. It is expected to continue for four more years and include students from Newark next year.

“This program was about beginning to think about careers and possibilities of what you might do in the future. It might spark an interest you didn’t know you had,” said Jessica Goldsmith-Barzilay, executive director of the Center for International Studies at Kean, and a coordinator of the STEaM program.



The program’s closing event, where students proudly shared posters showing what they did this summer in areas such as computer languages, forensics and more, was recently held at Kean’s Liberty Hall Academic Center.

“These students are rising stars,” said Union County Commissioner Al Mirabella, member of the Wenzhou-Kean University Board of Trustees, who delivered welcome remarks.

Full STEaM Ahead was created by Port Authority, in collaboration with Kean, as a way to get students engaged and interested in the agency and its work.

“We support the regional and local economy,” said Jenny Davis, chief of intergovernmental affairs at the Port Authority. “The Port Authority needs to get people engaged and interested in what we do. What better way to start than with students.”

The students learned about the topic of supply chain by doing a Lego building project exercise and talked about architectural design with the architect of buildings at the Kean Skylands campus.

They took field trips to Newark Liberty International Airport, Liberty Science Center and the Skylands campus in Jefferson Township, and worked with Kean students as their mentors.

“Our nation relies on STEM, so it’s important we engage young people in this content,” said Stanley Mierzwa, managing assistant director and lecturer, at Kean’s Center for Cybersecurity, who took part in the program. “In the future, these students will reflect on this as a really positive experience.”



The students introduced themselves and named their future career plans – forensic scientist, software engineer, police officer, pediatrician, professional kickboxer and more.

“I learned that math is needed for everything,” said Mena Mansour, 15, of Jersey City, a high school junior, who said she wants to become a doctor. “This program made me sure of what I want to do.”

Students were selected with the help of community partners, Team Walker in Jersey City and the Elizabeth Development Company in Elizabeth.

Parents attended the closing event along with their kids, taking photos and sharing in the students’ excitement.

“This was an excellent experience,” said Dave Appiah-Adjei, of Elizabeth, whose daughter Susan, 15, was one of the participants. “Most of my family is in the health field, but Susie wants to be in computers. I never had the opportunity to expose her to it. This is a stepping stone for her.”

John C. Raue, assistant vice president of strategic initiatives at Kean, worked with Goldsmith-Barzilay and Jeremiah Sullivan, Kean Career Services acting director for academic partnerships and career curriculum, to coordinate the four-week program.

Reaction from students, faculty and Kean student mentors has been extremely positive.

Coral Taveras of Union City, a junior biology major at Kean, was one of the student mentors. Taveras, who said she wants to become a pediatrician or an immigration lawyer, said she enjoyed working with the younger students, who asked her about college life.

“They learned from me, and I learned from them,” she said.

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