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MEDIA CONTACT:

Megan Gonzalez

Executive Director

University Marketing & Communications

University of West Florida

MeganG@uwf.edu

Office: 850.474.2658

Cell: 850.982.8836

UWF hosts STEM-focused Discovery Spot camps for middle- and high-school students

Pensacola, Fla. – July 12, 2016 – This summer, the University of West Florida is giving middle- and high-school students opportunities for hands-on, STEM-related learning experiences at a series of Discovery Spot camps.

STEM education encompasses science, technology, engineering and math. At the weeklong Discovery Spot camps, offered in June and July, UWF professors engage students with interactive projects related to 3-D printing, robotics, game design, mobile app design and holography.

According to Dr. Lakshmi Prayaga, faculty project leader for Discovery Spot and associate professor of information engineering technology and networking and communications, “students learn not only what these technologies are and how they work, but create their own projects in each type of tech and are encouraged to use these newfound skills to add new and exciting additions to the project that they dream up.”

Examples of student-designed projects are 3-D printed Monopoly game pieces, spacecrafts designed by 10-year-olds using principles of aerodynamics, rockets from StarTrek models and a car racing-themed video game.

For the Monopoly pieces, students recreate pieces of the famous game, including a top hat, battle ship, houses and hotels, using knowledge from geometry and computer-aided design skills they learn in the camp. They print them using a 3-D printer and get to take them home. For the racing game, students create a computer-based game, complete with scenery, characters and behaviors. In these activities they learn about incorporating 3-D models, adding lights, textures and other components to create scenes, and coding behaviors using conditional logic, Prayaga said.

“This creative outlet gives students a unique opportunity and connections with other students, faculty and industry professionals, on top of the training in each technology,” she added. “Additionally, they are exposed to workforce skills such as computation, programming, critical thinking, problem solving and soft skills such as communication and project management at this early age, preparing them to succeed in college and at work.”

Discovery Spot camps are open to students who will enter 5th-11th grades in 2016. To date, approximately 120 students are registered to attend this summer, including some from as far away as Georgia and South Florida. The three remaining sessions offered this summer are during the weeks of July 11, July 18 and July 25, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. CDT daily. This year's camp rate is on par with other camps at \$185 for one week.

This is the second year of Discovery Spot camps at UWF, after 140 students took part in a 2015 pilot program at a teaser rate of \$25 for one week.

Prayaga noted Discovery Spot differentiates itself from other STEM camps through its variety and breadth of technologies, and its incorporation of industry ready skills. Each activity is developed by UWF professors and industry leaders in accordance with current academic research, and planned and executed to be the most interesting and impactful for the students who learn from it, she said. Additionally, the camp provides an opportunity for parent and child engagement, offering instructions for a variety of projects and enabling parents to encourage their child's work at home.

For more information about camp dates, times and registration, visit Explore Summer Camps at [uwf.edu<http://uwf.edu/continuinged/departments/explore-summer-camps/>](http://uwf.edu/continuinged/departments/explore-summer-camps/), call 850.473.7468 or email [explorecamps@uwf.edu<mailto:explorecamps@uwf.edu%3C>](mailto:explorecamps@uwf.edu). More information about the Discovery Spot program is available at [DiscoverySpot.com<http://discoveryspot.com/>](http://discoveryspot.com/), or contact Dr. Lakshmi Prayaga at [lprayaga@uwf.edu<mailto:lprayaga@uwf.edu>](mailto:lprayaga@uwf.edu) for information regarding home-schooled students, weekend programs and after school programs.

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