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## **UWF hosts area students, teachers for Emerging Scholars in Environmental Health program**

**Pensacola, Fla. – Aug. 23, 2016** – The University of West Florida recently hosted 11 local high school students and nine teachers for the Summer 2016 Emerging Scholars in Environmental Health Program. This marks the third graduating class for the eight-week program that enhances hands-on learning and critical thinking skills and provides teachers with educational resources and methods for the classroom. The program includes field trips, lectures, competitive games, interactive projects and presentations by public health experts.

Highlights of the Summer 2016 students program included experiential learning activities based on various public health topics, such as food safety, emergency preparedness, water and wastewater and more. Students were taken on field trips both on and off campus, to locations like the local landfill, the UWF Wellness Center, and Ellyson Field, among others. Students also attended lectures by guest speakers from the UWF Department of Public Health, the UWF Health and Wellness Center, the Florida Department of Health in Escambia County and others.

“This program is a very effective community outreach effort and has been extremely popular with our secondary school partners,” said Dr. George Stewart, professor in the Department of Public Health. “We’ve recruited the best students from our area high schools to participate in the program, and in turn have promoted recruitment for UWF.”

At the end of the program, students complete a capstone project on a subject of their choice based on the Environmental Health topics discussed. The students present their projects to a panel of judges for awarding. First place was awarded to Kaitlyn Negron, a student at West Florida High School, for her paper entitled, “The Importance of Getting a Good Night’s Sleep.”

Each student graduate of the program receives educational materials and an electronic tablet. The teachers who participate in the program are able to develop lesson plans in Environmental Health, in addition to receiving \$250 worth of educational resources that can be used in their classrooms. The grant also supplied participating schools research-quality compound microscopes, microbiological incubators and microbiological supplies to support student participation in health and science classes.

Development of the Emerging Scholars in Environmental Health Program was funded in 2012 through a BP grant awarded to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine at Tulane University. Tulane officials approached the UWF Department of Public Health, Clinical and Health Sciences to serve as a sub-contractee on the grant, which supports satellite projects at Tulane, UWF, University of South Alabama and University of Southern Mississippi. The funding was recently extended from an initial three-year term to last five years, totaling \$520,000 to UWF and ensuring the program will continue through 2018.

To date, UWF has graduated 30 high school students and 45 teachers from the Emerging Scholars in Environmental Sciences Program, more than any of the other partners in the program.

“The UWF program has been highly successful because of our close working relationships with regional secondary education teachers and administrators,” Stewart said. “The University’s historic mission as a regional comprehensive institution has cultivated a strong outreach effort to our secondary education partners across many disciplines. One administrator in particular, Aisha Adkison, the Escambia County School District Health Science Specialist and a program coordinator on this grant, has been heroic in her efforts and dedication in marketing this program to secondary school students and teachers.”

To learn more about the Emerging Scholars in Environmental Health Program, visit the Department of Public Health, Clinical and Health Sciences webpage at [uwf.edu/coh](http://uwf.edu/coh).

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