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Girls Inc. Hopes Summer Camp Gets Teens Interested in Science & Math

According to the National Science Foundation, 66 percent of fourth-grade girls say they like science and math, but only 18 percent of college engineering majors are female.

To introduce girls to college and career possibilities, **Girls Inc. of Metropolitan Dallas** hosted a two-week Smart Summer College Camp. Twenty middle-school girls explored science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) concepts for one week at **Richland College** and a second week at the **University of Texas at Dallas' Science and Engineering Education Center**. *"Most of these girls have never met a scientist, much less a female one, so a significant goal of the Smart Summer College Camp was expanding the horizons of the young women selected to participate,"* said **Lori Palmer**, CEO of Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. members and all girls who had attended its outreach programs were invited to apply. A committee selected the participants after a rigorous interview process. Seventy percent of the girls who were chosen come from single-parent homes with annual incomes of \$30,000 or less. *"The Smart Summer College Camp is aimed at awakening the potential in middle-school girls as they explore the life of a full-time college student and discover opportunities in STEAM fields,"* Palmer said. "We encourage girls in this area because research demonstrates that women employed in STEAM careers earn an average of 33 percent more than those employed in other fields."

Dr. **Bernine Khan**, Director of UTD's Science and Engineering Education Center, said the university was thrilled to host week two of the camp. UTD is known for its strength in STEAM and STEM education and research, but women make up only about 43 percent of its student body. "Females, in general, represent a hugely untapped resource of potential STEM professionals in our nation, and when compounded with low socioeconomic and cultural issues, the pathway to a successful STEM career is stymied," Khan said. "The program introduces these girls to the flavors of STEM careers through interactions with female STEM professionals." The first week of camp at Richland College included learning activities in the sciences as well as in 3-D art, learning strategies and college readiness skills. During the UTD portion of the camp, the girls experienced campus life, living in dorm suites, finding out what it takes to apply for college, and participating in activities in bioengineering, nanotechnology, forensic science, robotics and space science. The week ended with a field trip to **Texas Instruments Inc.**

Girls Inc. member **Lola Stewart-Morris**, 13, said being in a science lab was great. "I believe we need more women scientists in the world, so I was inspired to meet women scientists leading girls to become women scientists vs. men telling us about science," she said. Dr. **Sherry Dean**, a Richland College speech communications professor and Girls Inc. board member, said the camp was a success.

"We saw the girls grow a lot," Dean said. "It was a very intense learning community, setting the stage for thinking routines and helping the girls see connections. They will be able to look back on this week and realize how they've become stronger, smarter and bolder." For more than 45 years, Girls Inc. has provided enrichment programs that empower girls to take charge of their lives. To learn more, visit girlsincdallas.org

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