



Camp  
**LAUNCH**  
 WILLIAM & MARY

## A SUMMER TO REMEMBER

Here at the Center for Gifted Education, we could not be more proud of the recent summer program we carried out in collaboration with the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. From July 15 through July 28, the College of William & Mary opened its doors to a special population of about 50 rising seventh graders from low-income backgrounds who were selected to attend by their school divisions for their high academic ability. The students took classes focusing on nanotechnology, robotics, writing, and personal development. In the evenings, they participated in enrichment clubs modeled after the Center for Gifted Education's popular Saturday/Summer Enrichment Programs. Using William & Mary's computer labs, residence halls, recreation facilities and dining hall, the campers had a potent dose of college life. Walking across a college campus is now a familiar experience to these students, who might never have had such an opportunity without Camp Launch.

Many campers commented on the valuable experience of living on a campus and having college students as counselors. Camp counselors were W&M students, many with challenging histories that mirrored some of the campers' experiences. The counselors, participants in the college's WMSURE scholars program, served as role models for the campers. WMSURE scholars are academically distinguished students who have overcome unusual adversity and/or are members of underrepresented groups who would contribute to campus diversity.

In addition to learning and experiencing college life on William & Mary's campus, we were able to leverage several local sites to expand and enrich this experience for the campers. They took a trip to Historic Jamestowne for a hands-on archaeological dig, visited Yorktown, and even spent time on a farm, where they learned how to milk cows!



STEPHEN SALPUKAS

The Center for Gifted Education at the College of William & Mary has served high ability students for 25 years, with special programs aimed at giving students advanced curricula and opportunities to prepare for their future through such events as Focusing on the Future, in which students meet with professionals to learn about potential career paths. Helping Camp Launch participants develop a future orientation that includes college, possibly even at William & Mary, was a primary objective. Through a focusing event, Camp Launch students met scientists and doctors, among other professionals who talked about their occupations. In class, they learned about the planning needed for different career paths, met a world-famous nanotechnologist via Skype, and visited a chemistry lab on campus. Campers participated in a variety of activities designed to excite them about learning.

We are confident that Camp Launch set these students on a trajectory for a bright future. It was truly a wonderful experience for all involved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tracy L. Cross". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Tracy L. Cross

*Executive Director, Center for Gifted Education  
Jody and Layton Smith Professor of Education*

## ABOUT THE CENTER FOR GIFTED EDUCATION:

William & Mary's Center for Gifted Education is a research and development center providing services to educators, policy makers, graduate students, researchers, parents, and students in support of the needs of gifted and talented individuals. Located within the School of Education, the Center has established an international reputation for excellence in research, curriculum development, and service.



STEPHEN SALPUKAS



ALL PHOTOS PROVIDED BY DAVID F. MORRILL M.A. '87  
*Special thanks to Oleta Coach Lines, Inc. for donating transportation for campers and instructors.*



Although Camp Launch focused on STEM, writing and personal development courses, campers were given a chance to take advantage of William & Mary's location in the Historic Triangle with trips to Jamestown Settlement and Yorktown. Here, students participate in an archaeological dig at Historic Jamestowne.



Students Isabell Busch and Jontae Clark work with teaching assistant and William & Mary undergraduate Tim Milbourne on scaling for a Nanotechnology project. The Nanotechnology and Lego Robotics courses gave campers abundant opportunities to learn while working on hands-on projects.



Dr. Tracy Cross, the executive director of William & Mary's School of Education's Center for Gifted Education, addressed Camp Launch participants and their parents. Students from 12 school divisions in Central and Southeastern Virginia were eligible for participation. Camp Launch was funded by the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation and is only one component of the Center for Gifted Education's work to bring educational equality to all gifted students.



William & Mary has hosted summer day camps for many years. However, students from low-income families were not very well represented, says Dr. Mihyeon Kim, director of Camp Launch. The two-week residential camp was designed to reach high-ability students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Dr. Kim says the students have to understand high expectations, set up their goals, and become disciplined to reach their full potential. "These are smart boys and girls," she says. "They can get the content, but I want them to understand self-discipline and self-management to make a change for their lives and career paths."



Campers watch as an instructor assists with a Lego robot programmed by a camper. Lego Robotics and Nanotechnology are the two Camp Launch courses that focused on a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) curriculum.



Campers share their work with parents and other family members on the last day of Camp Launch. Parents were invited to participate in an academic and career planning session with their children after the first week of the camp.



Parents of Camp Launch participants applaud during the closing ceremony on the last day of camp. Camp organizers hope to expand the camp to reach more students in the future.



Campers work together on a project. Camp organizers worked to familiarize camp participants to a structured environment and help them begin to build academic and career goals.



Teaching assistant and William & Mary student Sophie Berman, left, assists a camper. Several students from the College served as counselors for Camp Launch.



In addition to field trips to Yorktown and Jamestown Settlement, campers visited a local farm, where some tried milking a cow. They also engaged in daily physical activity and extracurricular clubs, such as debate, chess, drama or art. Transportation was donated by Oleta Coach Lines, Inc.



TayLynn Blunt works diligently on a project. She is one of about 50 students who participated in William & Mary's inaugural Camp Launch.



Campers in the Nanotechnology course visited Dr. Kristin Wustholz's chemistry lab at William & Mary to see scientists at work and to see real-world applications of the concepts they learned in class. Although nanotechnology has been incorporated into Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOLs), Camp Launch delves deeper into the subject.



A camper works with a Lego robot.

At the conclusion of Camp Launch, student campers, were asked to complete a survey. Below are some of their responses to the last question, which asked: **What was the most valuable aspect of this summer experience for you?**



Campers raise their hands in Liz Hobson's Nanotechnology class. In addition to the STEM-related courses, all campers were also required to attend daily enrichment sessions focused on personal development and writing. "Personal development will be very important to be successful in the future," says Dr. Mihyeon Kim. "Writing skills have to come along with the content knowledge."



Camper Chamar Smith shows off some of his work to his mother and grandmother during Camp Launch's closing ceremony.

"I learned how college students lived."

"It was meeting people just like me."

"I had fun and learned that I didn't have to be too hard on myself. I like talking to a real scientist instead of having to read about one who died a long time ago."

"I'll remember Lego Robotics, dining hall, the dorms, the counselors and all my classes."

"I liked building a robot, personal development and writing. I also really loved the food. I did not dislike anything."

"I will remember all of my classes and having fun with my friends. I also liked having a roommate."

"I remember the field trip because it was interesting, but hot. I will definitely remember the robotics class because I got to build a robot and made three video games. That is really cool!"





