

Workshop gives informatics insight

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Indiana Daily Student

Published Monday, October 23, 2006

The IU School of Informatics is working to bring the new age of computing to the next generation.

The school hosted 20 computer science students from 10 historically black colleges and universities to a three-day workshop called "Bring IT On!" this weekend, in which participants were encouraged to develop outreach programs for younger students in their respective institutions and communities.

An element of the workshop was the "Just Be" program, which explored the computing field and provided students with ideas on getting involved in the industry.

Informatics assistant professor Katherine Connelly, who is also the associate director of IU's Center for Applied Cybersecurity Research, and Samantha Foley, a computer science graduate student, worked together to co-chair the program.

Foley said the program's purpose was to educate participants about the computing field, encourage students to attend graduate school and motivate college students to create outreach programs similar to "Just Be."

"The workshop encouraged students to develop outreach programs to convince young children in their communities to get involved," Connelly said.

The workshop implemented a panel in which graduate students talked about applying to and attending graduate school.

Latasha Butler, a senior from Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, said her favorite part of the program was the graduate panel.

"It helped to make me feel better about graduate school," Butler said. "They answered a lot of my questions, and now the process is not as overwhelming as it first seemed."

The workshop also had a diversity panel in which faculty from the computer science and informatics departments spoke to students. Additionally, participants had an opportunity to view posters outlining recent projects completed by students in the School of Informatics.

The keynote speaker for the event was Juan Gilbert, associate professor of computer science and software engineering at Auburn University.

Gilbert gave a speech titled "Mentoring Students," in which he told students about graduate school, what it means to be a researcher and how to get involved in the field.

Connelly said the speech shared these important topics with students who wouldn't otherwise be exposed to such opportunities.

Tiffani Bell, a junior at Howard University in Washington D.C., attended the workshop to learn more about IU's computer science graduate program.

"I've recently attended a number of similar conferences," Bell said. "I think IU did a fabulous job, and I'm seriously considering attending IU for graduate school."

Ten colleges and universities from across the nation were invited to nominate two students each to attend the workshop. Participating schools were Central State, Howard, Claflin University, Jackson State University, Johnson C. Smith University, Lane College, Lemoyne-Owen College, Lincoln University, Spelman College and Wilberforce University.

Billy Jones, a junior at Central State said he hoped to gain information about graduate school at IU and to meet professors in the field.

"I've always been interested in the IU informatics graduate program and I thought this would be a good opportunity for networking," he said.

Foley said she feels the program was able to accomplish the goals intended.

"The students seem really excited about taking the new information they've learned back to their communities," she said.

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