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Bill Neumann, Professor of Practice in MIS

TIM FULLER PHOTOS

cyber track

MIS department hosts area high school students at biosphere2

Fifty high school students received full

scholarships sponsored by the National Security Agency (NSA) and the National Science Foundation (NSF) to attend the residential MIS GenCyber camp at the Biosphere2 this summer.

The GenCyber camps, developed by professor of practice in MIS Bill Neumann, were funded by the NSA through the NSF. The UA STEM Center, MESA (Math Engineering Science Achievement), and the Girl Scouts, partnered with the MIS department on the program.

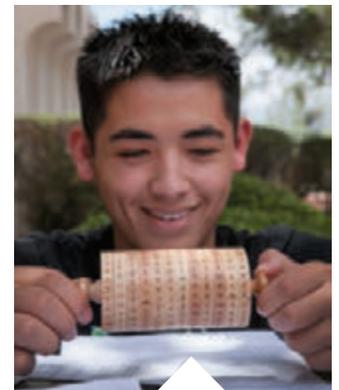
“The problem with reaching students for the STEM fields is that we’re a fixed pie,” said Neumann. “MIS, engineering, computer science—we’re all competing with each other for students. What we need is a bigger pie.”

Neumann aims to grow that pie by focusing on underserved students. “There are students who live two miles away from the UA who might as well be two million miles away,” he said. “We want to give them a chance to learn about STEM in general, MIS in particular, and the various careers that are out there.”

In addition to covering topics in cyber security such as computer and network basics, threat assessment, and defending personal computing, the GenCyber camps brought in professionals from the FBI and Raytheon to talk about career paths, offered students an insider’s look at the Biosphere2, and posed encryption challenges and a computer programming instructional competition.

Taking on all of that—while living in the residential casitas at the Biosphere2—offered an immersive experience for the students and their teachers. The Eller MIS Zipperman Scholars and the electrical and computer engineering majors who helped run the camp also got real-world experience.

“We don’t necessarily expect all of these kids to come to the MIS program, though that would be great,” said Neumann. “What we want is for them to come out of the program and be viewed as knowledgeable persons in their families and their community, and for them to understand what possibilities are open to them.”



TIM FULLER PHOTO

Decoding the cypher.

Students were challenged with a Jefferson cypher. They picked up code from descriptive signage around the Biosphere2, then took the code to their counselors to decode the message.