

UCF Newsroom

RESEARCH OPTIONS ABOUND FOR UCF STUDENTS

By Erika Finnimore

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Wearing a special helmet, students were transported to a virtual, three-dimensional world while learning about high-tech research projects at the University of Central Florida's Institute for Simulation and Training.

How research plays a role in developing technology -- like the kind used for virtual worlds -- is a lesson of a three-day Summer Research Academy at UCF that wrapped up Saturday. Organizers hope the academy inspires student interest in academic research.

"Research is a process that allows us to expand knowledge that we already have and help improve life for people," said Vanessa Dominguez, a graduate research assistant at UCF's Marriage and Family Research Institute.

UCF graduate students like Dominguez mentor academy participants, answering questions and providing guidance for getting involved in research at UCF.

The academy is free and open to transfer students and rising sophomores, juniors and seniors. It exposes them to unique research opportunities in many fields of study, including psychology and digital media.

While visiting IST's labs, students interacted with the different video game and virtual world programs created to improve training for those working in public safety, medicine and the military.

"We are learning how we can help solve problems with research and teach people how to handle situations when they can't test those situations in real life," said Destiny Watson, a sophomore Psychology major.

Other activities included a tour of UCF's main campus and a "Research Showcase" that presented different types of research happening all over campus.

Students also attended workshops that focused on identifying off-campus opportunities for research and finding a faculty mentor.

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“At UCF faculty are engaged in research and scholarly work in all disciplines,” said Kimberly Schneider, UCF’s director of Undergraduate Research Studies. “Students have the opportunity to work with faculty in all majors.”

According to Schneider, the academy is a proven success, with 80 percent of participants going on to pursue research while earning their degrees.

UCF Stands For Opportunity: The University of Central Florida is a metropolitan research university that ranks as the second largest in the nation with more than 56,000 students. UCF's first classes were offered in 1968. The university offers impressive academic and research environments that power the region's economic development. UCF's culture of opportunity is driven by our diversity, Orlando environment, history of entrepreneurship and our youth, relevance and energy. For more information, visit <http://www.news.ucf.edu> (<http://www.news.ucf.edu>).