



#STEMNOW

NYU-Poly launches a summer of K-12 exploration in science, technology, engineering and math

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Press Room

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POSTED JULY 9TH, 2013

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They ranged from nervous middle-schoolers who had never ventured far from their own urban neighborhoods to those accustomed to striding the corridors of power in Washington, D.C. Still, every person at the launch of the summer STEM [programs](#) at the Polytechnic Institute of New York University (NYU-Poly) had at least one thing in common: all were eager to see what the faculty members and graduate students had planned for #STEMNOW, as the programs are being collectively called. As the hashtag implies, the Institute is also kicking off a widespread social-media conversation centered on science, technology, engineering and math education.



#STEMNOW K-12 Launch

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After being introduced by NYU-Poly President Katepalli Sreenivasan, Representative Hakeem Jeffries of New York's Eighth Congressional District took the stage. He reminded his rapt audience of the story of Jackie Robinson, who broke baseball's color barrier right at Brooklyn's Ebbets Field. "He proved that if you allow folks who have been excluded onto the field and you give them the same equipment, they will play just as well—if not better." NYU-Poly, he asserted, was proving that if you gave New York City's students access to high-quality STEM education, with well-equipped labs and motivated teachers, they could perform with the best of them.

The students had another ardent cheerleader in Dr. Theresa Maldonado, who heads the National Science Foundation (NSF) Division of Engineering Education and Centers. To appreciative laughter, she reminded the students that even though the NYU-Poly professors had long strings of initials after

their names, they were very approachable and would welcome questions. "In fact," Maldonado quipped, "they love what they do so much it might be hard to get them to stop answering after you ask."

Venture capitalist and NYU-Poly trustee Fred Wilson, who has been involved in such companies as Twitter and Tumblr, also got a laugh, telling students, "There are two kinds of jobs: those where you tell the machines what to do, like when you [program](#) the software, and those where the machines tell you what to do. Believe me; you don't want a job where a machine tells you what to do."

Despite the star power of those speakers, the big draws of the morning were the campus tours and the

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opportunity to interact with NYU-Poly faculty members. "I just want to get into my lab and get to work," Shanna Comer, who teaches at Baychester Middle School, said. A participant in SMARTER, an NSF-funded program that puts teachers in NYU-Poly's engineering laboratories for guided workshops and research, Comer was excited to be spending her summer immersed in underwater robotics.

Crystal Choi and Bilal Nadeem are old hands in the lab. As students at Brooklyn Tech, they are among the most science-savvy teens in the city. They were thrilled, though, to have a chance to work with electrical engineers from NYU-Poly, researching a device that will be placed inside a football helmet to measure the severity of a concussion and transmit the information to a coach. "It's got the potential to be a really useful thing, so I'm excited about being a part of it," Nadeem said.

Julius Washington, a [student](#) at I.S. 383, is taking part in the Science of Smart Cities—which introduces students to the engineering, science, and technology that make cities more livable, efficient, sustainable, and safer—was too eager to get to his classroom to answer many questions. Asked what part of the program he was most excited about, he simply replied, "All of it."

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