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UCCI STUDENTS TO ATTEND WOMEN'S ENGINEERING ACADEMY IN AUSTRIA

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Two young Caymanian Science students from UCCI, Samantha Cridland and Kerrie Forbes, are heading to the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria for the International Summer Academy in Engineering 4 Women (ISAE4W) in Wels, Austria on July 13-24, 2015.



A send-off for Austria-bound students.

First row (seated) L-R: Samantha Cridland, Dr. Deborah Beal, Associate Professor (Math & Sciences), and Kerrie Forbes.

Second row L-R: Mr. Ray Jones, Chair of Technical, Vocational and Continuing Education Department, President JA Roy Bodden, JP, and Observatory Director Dr. William Hrudey.

Samantha and Kerrie will be joining a select group of highly-motivated and talented young women aged 17-26 from all over the world to experience top-class and challenging university-level coursework. Mr. JA Roy Bodden, JP, UCCI President

said, "This opportunity for our students will prove invaluable as they move forward in their formal studies. It is with a sense of pride and satisfaction that we at UCCU send these representatives to this Academy.

"The strengthening of the STEM discipline is an objective set by the college administration and this opportunity allows us to get an indication of our success."

The Academy's intensive, two week programme combines sophisticated theory with hands-on practical experience in engineering and natural sciences. In addition to knowledge transfer in these fields, social, cross-cultural and gender aspects are covered and discussed during lectures and workshops. Each participant can choose from one of two main topics: Physics and Technology and Biotechnology and Chemistry.

Eighteen year-old Samantha said, "I feel so honoured to have been given this opportunity to study abroad and am very proud to have been chosen to represent UCCI because it was my experience here that really allowed my love for science to break through."

She continued, "I am very anxious about travelling to Europe and being in class with new people, but at the same time, I think it will be a fantastic experience. To be around individuals speaking in different tongues and coming from different backgrounds is going to be incredible. I hope to succeed in the programme and look forward to obtaining new knowledge that I can use throughout my scholastic journey and my career moving forward."

Kerrie is equally excited about the ISAE4W. "I look forward to meeting other young women who share the same interest in science and engineering whilst exploring opportunities available to us in scientific careers," she said, underscoring the importance of establishing international contacts which will be useful now and in the future.

The 22 year-old who is graduating from UCCI in the fall says this opportunity came at the most opportune time. "Being that is happening before the start of my Bachelor's, this leaning experience can act as extra preparation for when I continue my studies overseas. We can learn so much from the classroom, but I believe opportunities like these are just as vital, including getting involved with internships and work shadowing. I have found that hands-on practical experience is of particular importance in STEM," she said.

The students said that they consider themselves fortunate to be able to study in an institution like UCCI where teachers work closely with them to achieve their academic goals. "When I go abroad I realize I will not have this luxury," Samantha said. "A larger institution means a bigger student body with busier teachers. I will also miss being close to home and having my family to lean on for support when I am stressed."

"I will definitely miss the friendly and helpful faculty," said Kerrie. "They've taken time in assisting me with my studies, including being available for extra help during

the weekends. I will also miss the annual STEM conference where local and international experts come to inspire us with their achievements and give valuable career advice.”

President Bodden said that UCCI’s STEM initiatives, with the biennial STEM Carib Conference being the principal initiative, have served as the catalyst in driving students’ interest. “From the sun studies done in the UCCI Observatory to our classes in Environmental Science, UCCI students are demonstrating ability, interest and enthusiasm. We look forward to collaborative work with our partnering institutions and expect to make even greater progress in the years ahead,” he said.

Both on the President’s List in the Fall of 2014 for earning a GPA over 3.75, Kerrie and Samantha were chosen by a multidisciplinary committee of UCCI STEM faculty Dr. Deborah Beal, Mr. Ray Jones, Dr. Pavlov Rameau and Dr. Rostern Tembo after a rigorous recruitment and selection process.

“Science and Math faculty recruited several young women to apply,” explained Dr. Beal. “We looked at grades, extracurricular activities, volunteerism and faculty recommendations. The final step was an interview with each candidate. Samantha and Kerrie were the most qualified and ranked the highest when all criteria were evaluated.”

The two then had to apply to the University of Applied Sciences in Upper Austria to be accepted into the programme.

The committee is quite proud of both Samantha and Kerrie. “The committee and the Math and Science department believe these young women will represent Cayman and UCCI very well. We hope they will serve as role models to other young women studying STEM disciplines. They are wonderful examples of students who have worked hard at their studies in science at UCCI and we are pleased they are competitive with students from anywhere else in the world. “Thanks to President Bodden for his role in identifying this opportunity. I’m sure it will be an experience these young women will never forget,” Dr. Beal concluded.

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