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Navajo Prep students to study careers in **South Africa**

G. Jeff Golden The Daily Times

FARMINGTON — Seven Navajo Prep sophomores are about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime. The students will travel in two waves to **South Africa** as part of a new program aimed at showcasing international career opportunities. The Leadership Education and Development program has provided business education seminars for high-schoolers for nearly 30 years, but this is the first time the program has gone international.

The first group is leaving June 14, while the second group departs June 28. Both will stay for around three weeks.

"The program goal is to immerse the students early in their academic development to what careers are available," said Navajo Prep human resources manager Sandra Westbrook.

The students went through a rigorous, competitive application process. Applicants had to be in the ninth grade while applying, have at least a 3.0 GPA, compile recommendations and complete various short-answer essays.

The travelers will meet up with peers from around the world and work in a team-based environment. They'll study international careers, with the goal being for students to see jobs that exist outside their back yard.

The first group, consisting of five girls, is bound for Johannesburg. The students will study at the University of Witwatersand and the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls.

It will be the first time that Eryka Peterson, 15, has traveled out of the country.

"I am very excited, but sometimes I'm a little scared," she said.

Since being selected for the trip, Peterson and her classmates have browsed Web sites and read books about Johannesburg. She said she's most looking forward to seeing the museums and the shops, and she doesn't expect too much of a culture shock.

"It's very modern, they say. As our society is right now, it's almost exactly the same in **South Africa**," Peterson said.

Sabrina Hood, dean of students at Navajo Prep, will accompany the five girls to Johannesburg. The school is trying to arrange a chaperone for the second group as well, comprising two students traveling to Cape Town.

The second group departs June 28. They'll study at the University of Cape Town and participate in many of the same activities as their Johannesburg-based peers.

Westbrook estimated the cost of the program to be between \$4,500 and \$5,000 per student, but Leadership Education and Development is covering the expenses, she said.

If all goes as planned, the students will return to the United States prepared to make informed decisions about their prospective career path.

"It definitely opens up a whole new level of awareness for them. Not only domestically what's available, but internationally what types of career opportunities are out there," Westbrook said.

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