

# FEF FOCUS

Volume 10, Issue 1 Fall 2011

## President's Message

One of the FEF's more important objectives is to ensure that the students we serve master essential skills that will empower them to solve the pressing problems of our world. At the doctoral level, that includes offering strategic support that helps Fellows develop into creative thinkers, innovative researchers, and prolific writers.

We offer that support through highly regarded conferences, live and online workshops, and individual consultations presented for Fellows and for students affiliated with programs that share our goals. This edition of the *Focus* highlights our recent student support success.

You will read about our annual Summer Research and Writing Institute (SRWI), a week of intensive, hands-on workshops that help participants advance their writing projects. To date, most Fellows who have attended SRWI have completed their dissertations and published research.

We introduce you to one such Fellow, Dr. Deidra Hodges, who moved to Florida after surviving Hurricane Katrina; enrolled in her

doctoral program; and fully engaged in McKnight conferences, including SRWI and its NSF grant writing workshops. Now an Engineering professor, she recently won an NSF grant to further her research in solar energy and also penned a compelling book about her post-Katrina ordeal. Surviving near disaster, excelling in her studies, and addressing America's energy crisis, Dr. Hodges epitomizes a scholar who, with determination and persistence, uses her skills to better the world.

Recognizing the need to continue to produce scholars like Dr. Hodges, the FEF also helps pre-college students develop essential skills through academic contests, summer enrichment camps, virtual tutoring, and more.

You will read about our 2011 History and Math Brain Bowl scholarship winners and the speech and oratory contest we initiated this year. The contest requires students to research, form opinions on current global issues, and write and deliver speeches that support their views. According to the judges, Broward County senior Sapphire Huie won the contest due largely to superior analytical writing skills that will

serve her well in college and beyond.

Given the importance of writing, we regularly seek to provide opportunities for more students to learn and practice those skills. In this edition of the *Focus*, we describe our new, partially online high school writing course, which we began evaluating this summer. Very preliminary results suggest the course may allow us to teach more students while maintaining costs.

These efforts reflect our internalized mandate to provide educational opportunity to greater numbers of students, even in the face of dwindling resources. We will continue to explore new ways to do so, thereby helping to generate hopeful possibilities for communities, nations, and our world.



Dr. Lawrence Morehouse  
President & CEO

## USF's Dr. Paul Dosal Challenges the FEF's New Class of Doctoral Fellows

In his Orientation address to the 2011-2012 class of McKnight Fellows, Dr. Paul Dosal, a fourth generation Cuban American, remembered the experience of not having teachers who shared his history. Now a University of South Florida vice provost, history professor and author of several acclaimed books on Latin America, he still laments the paucity of minority faculty.



Dr. Paul Dosal

"There are not enough of us. Despite years of progress, we are not close to the level of representation we should have," he declared. While he always assumed "the responsibility to teach everybody," he remains aware of the positive effect his background has on students who share his ethnicity and former socio-economic status.

From a working class upbringing and among the first in his family to attend college, Dosal worried about how to fund his education. "Follow your heart," his father advised; the family would find a way to help him. Family love and support, he noted, were absolutely critical to his

success. They bolstered his confidence to pursue his doctorate and even to travel to dangerous locales to further his scholarly goals.

He recalled his mother crying when he returned home from research trips to war-ravaged Nicaragua and Guatemala. "Keep in mind the loved ones who are with you," and consider the impact of your studies on them, Dosal cautioned.

Reminding Fellows to always act with their ultimate goal—earning the Ph.D.—in the forefront of their minds, he advised them to "learn the

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## MDF Alumna Dr. Deidra Hodges Excels in Solar Energy Research

Uprooted but undefeated by Hurricane Katrina, six years ago, New Orleans native Deidra Hodges and her two children relocated to Florida and began rebuilding their lives. Unable to find employment, Hodges embraced the opportunity to pursue her Ph.D. focusing on solar energy, a subject that has fascinated her since high school.



Dr. Deidra Hodges

With her strong academic and employment record, including a bachelor's in Physics from Dillard University, a master's in Electrical Engineering from Columbia, and extensive experience teaching and working in STEM, she gained admission to the University of South Florida (USF). She enrolled in the electrical engineering program in 2006 on a McKnight Doctoral Fellowship. Former USF Professor Shekhar Bhansali praises Hodges: "I have advised eight doctoral fellows while at USF, including five NSF Graduate Fellows, one Department of Homeland Security Graduate Fellow, and two NSF Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Fellows, but I believe Hodges outshines them all in terms of her tenacity, professional demeanor, research aptitude, communication skills, and sincere interest to improve the lives of students from traditionally underserved backgrounds. I can easily rank her in the top 5% of students I have known."



fossil fuels. With the grant funding, she hopes to develop low-cost, efficient devices that convert sunlight into energy using abundantly available materials.

Hodges will integrate her BRIGE research into a new course—Fundamentals of Solar Power and Renewable Energy—and into outreach activities, including a solar energy camp for middle school girls, which will build upon her noted record of community service. In 2009, USF President Dr. Judy Genshaft presented Hodges with a Women's Leadership Award for that service, which included engaging Tampa K-12 students in hands-on science activities.

Now thriving in an environment where she can create viable energy alternatives for humanity while mentoring future engineers, Hodges views her work as an opportunity to serve and repay the positive influences that have helped her surmount obstacles in her life. She recently wrote *Hurricane Katrina: One Family's Survival Story*, which depicts perhaps the most significant obstacle to date—her intense struggle after Hurricane Katrina. The book details her family's post-disaster ordeal and portrays the tenacious personal will and invaluable family, relief organization, and other critical support it took to survive.



Dr. Hodges fabricates flexible thin-film solar cells. Photo Courtesy of University of South Florida

Hodges graduated from USF in 2009, after just three years in the doctoral program, and credits MDF Program support for helping her expedite her work. She internalized one key strategy in particular from attending McKnight conferences: research and write every course paper so that it later forms part of your dissertation. She also finalized plans for her dissertation and learned procedures for applying for National Science Foundation (NSF) grants while participating in the McKnight Summer Research and Writing Institute.

After graduating from USF, Hodges joined the Electrical Engineering faculty at Southern Polytechnic State University in Marietta, Georgia, where, in July of this year, she won a highly competitive NSF Broadening Participation Research Initiation Grant in Engineering (BRIGE). The two-year, \$175,000 grant will further her research in solar energy as well as her goal to help make sunlight a viable alternative to imported

*"I have advised eight doctoral fellows while at USF, including five NSF Graduate Fellows, one Department of Homeland Security Graduate Fellow, and two NSF Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship Fellows, but I believe Hodges outshines them all in terms of her tenacity, professional demeanor, research aptitude, communication skills, and sincere interest to improve the lives of students from traditionally underserved backgrounds. I can easily rank her in the top 5% of students I have known."*

*-- Dr. Shekhar Bhansali*

## Dr. Paul Dosal

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terrain" of their departments and universities and be prepared for faculty politics. "Leave your ego at the door, afford due credit and respect to advisors, and avoid conflict unless absolutely necessary."

He encouraged Fellows to spend their time developing and honing the discipline necessary to meet the demands of their studies. Learn how to analyze and research, how to read and review books quickly, and how to evaluate potential dissertation topics, he charged.

He also counseled Fellows to be aware that many programs fail to teach a variety of essential skills, such as pedagogy, writing, incorporating research into a talk, or converting a dissertation into a book. "It helps to have the attitude to want to develop these skills and seek knowledge for yourself," said Dr. Dosal. "Getting there is the fun part; enjoy the ride."

## Dr. Karen Brown Dunlap Welcomes New McKnight Fellows to the FEF Community

As an FEF McKnight Junior Faculty Fellow, Dr. Karen Brown Dunlap felt “surrounded by people of substance who had mastered academics but who also cared.” At the 2011 McKnight New Fellows’ Orientation, Dr. Dunlap, President of the Poynter Institute, journalism scholar and educator for more than 30 years, welcomed new Fellows to the FEF community and offered wise counsel.

An amateur runner, Dr. Dunlap told students to prepare for the doctorate the way a runner prepares for a race, by learning the rules and customs of the ensuing challenge. Learn the practices and culture of your depart-

ments and graduate schools, and begin figuring out the questions to ask and whom you can rely on, she advised.

“You look good today. Everybody does” at the start of the race, but “when the going gets tough, plans may fade. My advice is not to worry about crossing the finish line. Focus on the next step. Keep taking each individual next step, because you know you can do that.”

Recalling how one of her University of Tennessee professors told her she was “not doctoral material,” Dunlap takes obvious, humble pleasure in noting that, after years of professional accomplishments, the University honored

her with both Professional Achievement and Distinguished Alumni Awards. “Never let anyone define or limit you,” she counseled. “Know who you are, and just keep doing what you are enrolled at your university to do.”

Often, Dunlap said, she has motivated herself by mentally running races for someone else. “Find a topic you can love, something that is meaningful,” and focus on something bigger than yourself,” she said. “You must critically examine serious issues which are changing our nation—immigration, unemployment, population

shifts and more. What better place to accept and prepare for the challenge than in a doctoral program?” she asked.



Dr. Karen Brown Dunlap

“The doctorate led me in many directions. It will make a difference in the things you can do, the people you can touch. I urge you to stay connected

to your friends and colleagues. You are in the presence of greatness, you are a part of greatness, and together you can greatly impact the world. Enjoy the run.”

## Orientation Helps New Fellows Transition to Ph.D. Student Life



2011 New Fellows’ Orientation Graduate Deans’ Panel

At the June 2011 New Fellows’ Orientation, FEF staff, university deans and professors, and matriculating Fellows shared strategies with the MDF Program’s 42 new Fellows to help them seamlessly transition to Ph.D. student life.

On the Graduate Deans’ panel, Dr. Laurence Alexander from the University of Florida, Dr. Koren Bedeau from the University of Miami, Dr. Nancy Marcus from Florida State University, Dr. Sonja Montas-Hunter from Florida International University, and Dr. Michael Stern from the University of Central Florida explained that seeking a Ph.D. means embarking on an educational experience that will exceed the rigor of prior studies and require greater time commitment, perseverance, and independent discovery, research, and writing.

They advised Fellows to read their department handbooks and understand the policies concerning their expected degrees, get involved in the culture of their programs by attending colloquia and interacting with faculty and other students, and take advantage of the counseling and other support offered by the office of the graduate school.

The Deans encouraged Fellows to develop relationships with and seek guidance from mentors, learn to accept criticism without becoming defensive, and avoid conflict or keep it from escalating to a harmful level. They also suggested students develop a daily plan of study and set dates for completing coursework, comprehensive exams, and both the proposal and dissertation defenses.

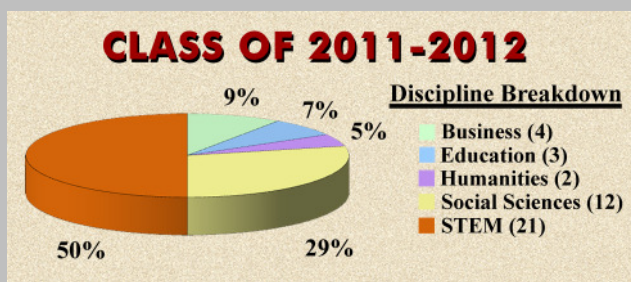
When discussing dissertation writing, the panel proposed Fellows begin early to decide on manageable research topics, choose advisors to guide their research, and immerse themselves in the literature of their fields.

On the current Fellows’ panel that followed the Deans’ session, Monica Duran (2010, UM), Brian Fisher (2006, UCF), and Julio Medrano (2008, USF) imparted practical tips for balancing Ph.D. studies, family life, and other goals—from freezing food in portions, to incorporating spouse’s and children’s skills into Ph.D. projects, to establishing and maintaining priorities.

“The reality is, finishing the Ph.D. must be the first priority and family second, because completing the degree as quickly as possible will benefit your family in the long run,” Duran noted. Fisher added that Fellows will most likely earn their Ph.D.’s if they remain determined, seek to use their degrees to improve the world, plan their families carefully, and maintain balanced lifestyles. Medrano advised Fellows to live according to the 80/20 rule, where only 20% of their “to do” lists really matters, and they complete that 20% first.

“All of the Orientation speakers tailored their presentations to address very real concerns and challenges, which significantly alleviated my fears,” said one new Fellow.

She and the rest of her cohort began their programs in August, with four pursuing degrees in business; three in education; two in the humanities; twelve in the social sciences; and twenty-one in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.





## Summer Institute Leads to Defended Dissertations and Published Research

Committed to helping Fellows complete their dissertations, write funded grant proposals, and publish their research, in 2007, the FEF initiated the Summer Research and Writing Institute (SRWI). Each year, advanced matriculating MDF Fellows, recent graduates, and Junior Faculty Fellows (JFF's) participate in SRWI, where they receive guidance on writing and publishing from senior faculty, journal editors, and scholarly publishers; engage in hands-on SPSS and STATA software training; and meet one-on-one with a member of the FEF's editorial team to refine their writing projects. The majority of participants have written successful dissertation proposals and dissertations and/or had their work published after attending SRWI.

A number of matriculating Fellows, like second year student Robin Brooks, have published in scholarly journals after SRWI. Brooks attended the 2010 SRWI specifically to prepare a book review for publication in *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory (JAC)*. With the help of SRWI editor and USF Professor Dr. Elizabeth Metzger, Robin completed the review of Shirley Wilson Logan's *Liberating Language: Sites of Rhetorical Education in Nineteenth-Century Black America*, which was recently published in volume 31 of *JAC*. Brooks affirms that SRWI helped her achieve her goal: "Dr. Metzger critiqued my writing and provided useful advice that I had not even considered, like reading reviews featured in *JAC* so I could adjust my work accordingly."



MDF Fellow Robin Brooks

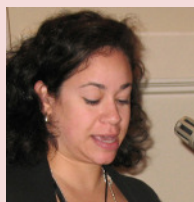
Also since SRWI, Fellow Jennifer Bolden has published co-authored papers in the *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* and in *Learning and Individual Differences*. Others have had papers accepted for conference presentation and for future publication, including MDF graduate Natanya Duncan, who completed her dissertation after attending SRWI.



Dr. John Warford

Like Duncan, many Fellows have finalized dissertation proposals and full dissertations after SRWI. However, the success of one Fellow—Dr. John Warford—deserves special mention. In 2010, Warford completed his dissertation after 17 years filled with delays caused by stifling family and medical issues, an achievement he attributes in part to guidance received at SRWI. "Dr. Marvin Dawkins [University of Miami] helped me restructure my dissertation and Dr. Metzger [USF] helped me write with greater clarity," Warford recounts. "I was prepared for my dissertation defense because they had already pointed out areas in question, and I was able to quickly provide answers to my Committee."

In addition to completing dissertations, a number of participants have published books after SRWI. In fact, both MDF graduate and JFF Dr. Kersuze Simeon-Jones and JFF Dr. Ylce Irizarry revised manuscripts for publication while attending. Simeon-Jones' book, *Literary and Socio-Political Writings of the Black Diaspora, 19th and 20th Centuries*, was published by Lexington Books in 2010. Irizarry plans to submit her work, *New Memory: Contemporary Chicana/o and Latina/o Literature*, for publication later this academic year.



Dr. Ylce Irizarry

In addition to helping participants advance their writing projects, SRWI helps Fellows prepare for their dissertation defenses and introduces them to potential collaborators and acquisition editors from com-

mercial and university presses. The FEF invites up to thirty advanced scholars to participate in SRWI each year. To receive invitations, Fellows should contact Communication Specialist Phyllis Reddick at the FEF by the April preceding the summer they wish to attend.

## FEF Offers Online Writing Workshop for USF

In July 2011, the FEF offered its first non-McKnight online graduate writing workshop, for STEM students in the University of South Florida's (USF's) Bridge to the Doctorate Program. The workshop, "Achieving Precision and Coherence in Scholarly Scientific Writing," focused on helping aspiring scientists express themselves in their writing logically and with clarity and concision.

Ten students participated in the workshop, during which they reviewed online resources, completed writing assignments for presenter review and comment, worked on papers during one-on-one Skype office hours with the instructor, wrote collaboratively in several synchronous virtual classroom sessions with the presenter and their peers, and discussed writing skills with the presenter and other experts at a live group meeting held at USF.

Nine of the ten students completed evaluations at the end of the workshop. As to workshop components, all agreed (88% strongly) that the posted readings, podcasts, videos and assignments were relevant and contributed to their learning. All agreed (75% strongly) that the group virtual classroom sessions contributed to their learning, and all agreed (66% strongly) that office hours with the presenter contributed to their learning.

*"During this workshop, I was in the middle of editing my thesis proposal. Therefore, most of the assignments that I prepared were based on it, and all suggestions made by my peers [and the presenters] were incorporated in the new version. Upon the completion of the workshop, I've realized that my proposal has significantly improved. For this, I am grateful."*

*-- University of South Florida STEM Graduate Student*

As to the overall effectiveness of the workshop, 78% rated it as "excellent," and 22 percent rated it "above average." Also, 88% rated the degree to which skills learned in the workshop would help them with upcoming or current coursework or writing projects as "excellent," with 12% rating it "above average."

Finally, 100% indicated they would take another FEF online writing workshop, and, though not required, seven of nine posted reasons they would enroll again, including the following:

- "This workshop provided very useful tools to improve my writing skills."
- "I found it extremely useful. I will definitely revisit the material provided by the workshop."
- "I would attend because writing is important for my Ph.D."
- "I would attend to learn more and improve my writing skills."
- "During this workshop, I was in the middle of editing my thesis proposal. Therefore, most of the assignments that I prepared were based on it, and all suggestions made by my peers [and the presenters] were incorporated in the new version. Upon the completion of the workshop, I've realized that my proposal has significantly improved. For this, I am grateful."

## FEF Pilots Blended High School Writing Course

Watch President Obama's Inaugural Address, and write five sentences in which you mimic his use of parallelism. Listen to Lee Greenwood's recording of "Proud to Be an American," and correct the dangling modifier in the opening lyrics. Select six headlines from the *New York Times* online, and use them to create a subject-verb agreement quiz for your classmates. These are a few of the active learning, writing application tasks students tackled in the FEF's pilot online SAT Writing course.



Columbia County Online Writing Class

This summer, 12 out of 41 Columbia County Camp students took the course, a blended offering that combined Web-based and in-class SAT Writing preparation. The FEF evaluated the effectiveness of the course, randomly designating half of 24 students with similar diagnostic pre-test scores as the study group and half as a control group.

The control group prepared for the Writing section of the SAT by working solely in person in a traditional class setting with a certified teacher. The study group prepared for the Identifying Sentence Errors, Improving Sentences, and Improving Paragraphs portions of the SAT Writing section online. They then worked with a certified teacher in class to review and practice for the Improving Paragraphs and Essay portions.

The Internet course infused a rigorous curriculum aimed at helping the study group



Summer Camp students at work

master the conventions of standard written English. The course Web site presented video overviews of the SAT Writing section and strategies for acing each portion. It also incorporated the FEF's thirteen study modules that reviewed the grammar, usage, mechanics, sentence structure, editing, and revising topics most frequently tested on the SAT and critical to college-level writing success.

Subjects ranged from faulty sentences to coordination and subordination to paragraph unity. The module for each subject included (1) audio and/or video rule refreshers and examples of rules in context; (2) interactive practice exercises that generated immediate feedback; (3) writing assignments in which students applied the rules and later revised their work pursuant to instructor response; and (4) a multiple choice quiz that included both general and SAT-type questions and allowed students to attempt several responses and receive instant feedback on each one.

To determine the modules to assign each student, staff assessed skills by analyzing answers to questions on the diagnostic pre-tests and reading essays from simulated SAT's. They then developed a personal study plan that delineated the subjects, exercises, assignments, and quizzes on which the student worked from day to day and appeared on the course Web site as a Wiki-"To Do" list. Both the student and staff posted progress updates to the "To Do" list each afternoon.

One of the students who thrived in the online environment, Miranda Hand, enjoyed the experience: "The online writing part helped me learn what I needed to learn and motivated me because it taught me how to work independently." Indeed, members of the study group who possessed the discipline necessary to work alone fared best in the online course. In contrast, neither of the two students who reportedly required near-constant teacher supervision completed their assigned modules by the end of the Camp.

At the end of the Camp, all students took a diagnostic post-test and another simulated SAT. Scores for students in the study group



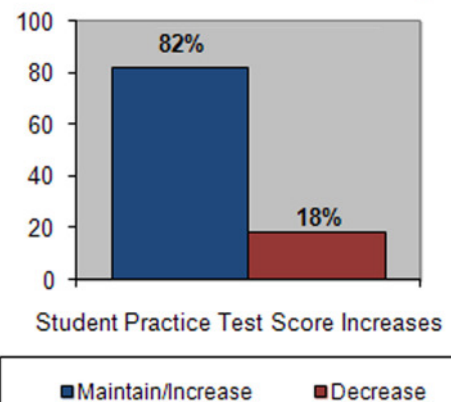
Columbia County Career Planning Session

matched or exceeded those of students in the control group. These preliminary results suggest the FEF may be able to teach at least portions of SAT Writing fully online to certain students in future camps and perhaps serve more students without increasing personnel expenses. Studies will resume during the summer of 2012.

## FEF's 2011 For-Credit Summer Camps

During the summer of 2011, the FEF conducted for-credit academic SAT & College Preparation Summer Camps for students at East Lee County High School to the south; Fort Pierce Central High, Saint Lucie County, in the middle of the State, and Columbia County High School to the north. The Camps offered rising 9th through 11th grade students instruction in math, reading, writing and standardized test preparation, along with weekly college and career planning guidance. Through the course of the Camps, students took several simulated SAT's, with the majority maintaining or improving their scores by the end of the programs.

### 2011 Summer Intensive SAT Programs





## Students Excel at 2011 Brain Bowl and Pre-College Summit Academic Skills Contests



From top to bottom: Brain Bowl Champions in History & Culture, Lincoln High Trojans, Tallahassee Coalition COE; 11th-12th Grade Math, The Chargers, Palm Beach County COE; 9th-10th Grade Math, Math Wizards, UCF-McKnight COE; and 6th-8th Grade Math, Math Masters C, South Florida COE



NAS Voices Contest Officials Dr. Rufus Barfield II, Rachelle Munson, Esq., Lyra Logan, Esq., and Mr. Orlando Pizana

Now freshmen at the University of Florida, Columbia, Howard, Central Florida, Spelman, Florida State, the University of Pennsylvania, Florida A&M, and other schools, many 2011 Brain Bowl scholarship recipients led their teams to first, second, or third place wins in the Competitions after years of studying and competing at the County, Regional and/or State levels.

The 11th and 12th Grade Math champions, The Chargers from Palm Beach County, and History & Culture first place team, the Lincoln High Trojans from Tallahassee, both benefited from the experience of members who had competed in Brain Bowl in prior years.

For this year's win, members of both teams received cash scholarships and the opportunity to select four-year tuition scholarships contributed to the FEF by Florida A&M University, Florida Atlantic University, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida Institute of Technology, Florida International University, Florida State University, New College of Florida, Rollins College, St. Petersburg College, Stetson University, University of Central Florida, University of Florida, University of North Florida, University of South Florida, University of Tampa, and University of West Florida.

Other Brain Bowl and National Achievers Society Summit contest victors earned trophies and gift certificates. They include 9th-10th Grade Math champions the Math Wizards, UCF-McKnight Center of Excellence; 6th-8th Grade Math champions Math Masters C, South Florida Center of Excellence; 6th-8th Grade Word Wizard Competition winner Heaven Taylor-Wynn, St. Petersburg College Center of Excellence; 3rd-5th Grade Word Wizard Competition winner Linash Thomas, North Florida Center of Excellence; 4th-5th Grade Laws of Life Essay Contest winner Caleb Herring, North Florida Center of Excellence; 6th-8th Grade Laws of Life winner Marcline Elie, Palm Beach County Center of Excellence; 9th-12th Grade Laws of Life winner Nakaysha Pullen, Pasco-Hernando Center of Excellence; and NAS

Sapphire Huie, Atlantic Coast Center of Excellence.

With her triumph, Huie, a 12th grader, became the inaugural winner of the FEF's new speech and oratory contest designed to sharpen students' public speaking, writing and critical thinking skills as they form and express opinions on complex national and international issues. She chose to



NAS Voices Contest winner Sapphire Huie

write and speak on the topic "The Images Portrayed, Music Performed, and Behavior Displayed by Popular Artists Have/Do Not Have a Negative Effect on Today's Youth." Huie won by unanimous scoring of Contest judges Rachel Munson, Esq., from the Agency for Workforce Innovation; Mr. Orlando Pizana, Instructor at St. Petersburg College; and Dr. Rufus L. Barfield II, a professor at the University of Central Florida.



Left: 3rd-5th Grade Word Wizard Winner Linash Thomas; Right: 6th-8th Grade Word Wizard Winner Heaven Taylor-Wynn

*"The key to lessening the impact of negative influences in popular culture is not to pressure government to restrict artists or the media. Parents are the key. They are the ones who teach children values and lessons. It is their job to help a child develop a sense of self-worth that has nothing to do with emulating a favorite artist or being anyone other than herself."*

*-- Sapphire Huie  
NAS Voices Winner*



From left to right: NAS Voices contestants Brittany Collins, St. Petersburg College COE; Tyler Parker, Santa Fe College COE; Linzie Bogan II, Tallahassee Coalition COE; Krishnan Sethumadhavan, UCF-McKnight COE; Dominique Mortimer, South Florida COE; Je'Nel Yore, Pasco-Hernando COE; and Sapphire Huie, Atlantic Coast COE

## Students Explore Options at the 2011 Middle School Career Fair



*Dr. Rosalie Wright Cook, Guidance Counselor  
Seminole County Public Schools*

*Mr. Arup Guha, IT Instructor  
University of Central Florida*

*Ms. Angelic Hall, Crime Lab Analyst  
Latent Prints*

*Mr. Gilberto Hall, Vice President  
Boys & Girls Club*

Sixth grader Miriel already knows she wants to become an engineer like her mom, but her best friend Jai simply has “no idea” what career she will pursue. She and other 6th through 8th graders at the FEF’s statewide National Achievers Society Pre-College Summit got the chance to explore a wide range of possibilities at the annual Middle School Career Fair held on March 26, 2011.

The FEF has offered a Career Fair at each Summit since 2007, when Florida law first required students to declare their major areas of interest upon entering 9th grade. To help students meet that mandate, the FEF structures the annual Fair to introduce them to professionals working in a variety of occupations; explain the academic skills and education required for certain fields; and demonstrate the connection between middle and high school coursework and various vocations.



*Ms. Katrina Webster, Entertainment  
Manager, Disney Corporation*

At the 2011 Fair, students visited with ten professionals, including a language arts teacher, aerospace engineer, crime lab analyst, information technology specialist, guidance counselor, construction engineer, non-profit executive, math specialist, environmental specialist, and Disney entertainment manager. All answered students’ questions, described their daily routines, and outlined the education and preparation required to land their jobs. Most also brought displays to showcase aspects of their work, and all stressed the need to attain a good high school and college education.

In addition to talking with professionals at the Fair, students met with Ms. Laura Crouch and Mr. Felix Daniels from the Career Services Department at the University of Central Florida, who helped them complete analytical and written exercises designed to clarify their interests and match them with related employment options.



*Ms. Valerie Hobbs, Language Arts Teacher  
Orange County Public Schools*

*Mr. Thaddeus Jones, Aerospace Engineer  
Coleman Aerospace*

*Mr. Terrance Nealy, Construction Engineer  
City of Winter Haven*

*Ms. Margaret Walker, Math Specialist  
Orange County Public Schools*

## FEF Revamps fefonline.org

In August 2011, the FEF redesigned its [www.fefonline.org](http://www.fefonline.org) Web site to better showcase McKnight Doctoral Fellowship and Pre-College Program offerings and successes. Site visitors seeking Doctoral Fellowship information may read about our programs and student support, apply for the Doctoral Fellowship, register for MDF meetings, and both update listings and search for Fellows and graduates in the password-protected MDF Directory. Visitors seeking Pre-College information may learn about our Centers of Excellence and National Achievers Society, download Brain Bowl and other pre-college contest rules, register Brain Bowl teams, apply for summer camps, input camp student data, and download forms to sign up for online SAT Prep and middle school homework help at [NAS Online](http://NAS Online).



## Upcoming FEF Events

February 24-25, 2012

MDF Mid-Year Research and Writing Conference, Tampa

March 23-24, 2012

27<sup>th</sup> Annual Brain Bowl Competitions and Florida NAS Pre-College Summit, Orlando



## FEF Board of Directors

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*Volume 10, Issue 1 Fall 2011*

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*The FEF's mission is to strengthen the larger community by creating and implementing programs and services that lead to greater educational advancement for historically underrepresented groups.*

**For information on how you may support FEF programs, please call 813-272-2772.**

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