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# Advanced Learning Program For Teens



**M**ichele Hawthorne is bright, enthusiastic and serious about preparing herself for the college career she sees ahead of her.

In all these attributes the 15-year-old former valedictorian at Washington's Carter G. Woodson Junior High School is typical of students who have been accepted into Howard University's Advanced Learning Program (ALPS.)

Last summer, Michele was one of 17 academically talented junior and senior high school students from around the nation who participated in the five-week program.

Through ALPS, eighth-through-twelfth graders take college preparatory and college level courses in English, mathematics, computer science, chemistry and foreign languages—all taught by Howard faculty. They also receive instruction in such practical skills as how to take a test, take notes and research a paper. And they participate in cultural and recreational activities, among them photography, swimming, modern dance and visits to museums and theaters.

The ALPS curriculum reflects the program's three main goals:

- To provide a learning environment characteristic of the traditional college experience;

- To acquaint the students with the essential techniques utilized in taking standardized examinations;

- To enhance the students' exposure to fields of study to stimulate them to think critically about alternative choices.

Admissions requirements include an



"A" average in at least one core area (English, science or mathematics); acceptable scores on a national standardized test; and recommendations from a school principal, counselor or teacher.

Michele was recommended for ALPS by a school counselor. She says she was interested in participating in the program "so I could develop more skills and work to strengthen areas I was weak in, like algebra."

Today, she speaks enthusiastically about her summer experience: "The program was very beneficial. I'd never worked with computers before. It was very interesting and a lot of fun. First we did some basic programs in the classroom and then we got to actually work on terminals."

Partly as a result of that experience, she says, she is thinking about a future career in computer science "or maybe in engineering."

Michele is currently a student at Banneker, Washington's new academic high school, which is a few steps away from the main Howard campus and has considerable input from the university. "Other public schools weren't teaching what I was looking for," she says of the academically rigorous school. (Students, for instance, must take at least a year of a classical language in addition to studying a modern language.)

ALPS coordinator Geraldine Harper offers some quick observations to explain the appeal of the program to a student like Michele: "Students are given the opportunity to excel at any level—without

the pressure of grades. They gain some feel for what a university is, academically and culturally, and for the camaraderie and the feeling of freedom of a university. They discover learning is exciting, which, unfortunately, they sometimes don't feel in their own schools. Then, too, many of the students in the program, who are bright, feel isolated in their own schools. Here they get a chance to meet others like themselves. They are challenged."

She then offers a personal note: "I don't feel summer is a time to stop learning."

Adds Graham Johnson, director of the university's Summer School, through which the program is administered: "Howard is an institution that is committed to providing services to the community. This [bright children] is a community we should address. Over a considerable period of time, the emphasis has been on children with deficiencies. In contrast, ALPS attempts to provide a program and challenges for children who are academically talented. Too often these children get ignored—even more so when they are Black."

Both Johnson and Harper admit the program represents not only an outreach effort but good PR for the university. Harper points with pride to the fact that all four high school seniors who participated in the program during its first year (1980) opted to go to Howard. Observes Johnson: "The kids we attract to the program score quite well on College Board exams and are sought by universities throughout the country. When these students reach

college age, we hope to attract them to Howard."

Dates for next year's ALPS session are June 28-July 30. Harper says she hopes the program will be able to expand next summer to serve 50 youths. She also encourages alumni and other interested individuals to contribute to the program so that scholarships can be awarded to able students whose families cannot afford the \$500 program fee. Last year, for instance, Delta Sigma Theta provided funds for one such scholarship.

ALPS is just one of the university's summer programs designed to broaden the lives of children and teens. The School of Education's Summer Enrichment Program for Gifted and Talented Youth is targeted at third-through-eighth graders and aims to strengthen their skills in critical thinking and problem solving and provide additional stimuli and focus for their creativity. Other summer activities for young people include a children's theater workshop and programs in engineering, botanical sciences, allied health and sports.

For further information about ALPS and other summer youth programs, contact Graham Johnson, Director, Summer School, Howard University, Washington, DC 20059. □